

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/4313>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

**Racism, 'Racial Formation' and the Class Struggle:
A Study of 'Race' and Organised
Labour in England**

Satnam Virdee

Doctoral Thesis

**University of Warwick
Department of Sociology**

January 2000

Contents		Page
Acknowledgements		v
Summary		vi
Abbreviations		vii
PART ONE	THEORIES, CONTEXT, METHODS	
Chapter 1	Introduction	2
Chapter 2	Racism, working class agency and anti-racist action	16
	Introduction	16
	The weberian perspective: John Rex and colleagues	17
	The black radical perspective: Paul Gilroy	26
	The neo-Marxist perspective: Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea	41
	Conclusions	55
Chapter 3	The rise and decline of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project	58
	Introduction	58
	The rise of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in the 1960s and 1970s	59
	The decline of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in the 1980s and 1990s	66
	Conclusions	77
Chapter 4	The importance of trade unionism: approach and methods	81
	Introduction	81
	Racist and anti-racist action in trade unions in historical perspective	91
	Racism and anti-racism in trade unions in the contemporary social formation	95
	Research techniques	102

PART TWO	LABOUR AND RACISM: THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP	
Chapter 5	Racism and resistance in trade unions before ‘race relations’: 1800-1945	115
	Introduction	115
	Capitalism, working class racism and Irish migrant labour: 1800-1850	118
	The ‘new’ model unions and the strengthening of trade union racism: 1850-1885	133
	The new unionism and the (re-)formation of mass ‘inter- racial’ class action: 1885-1910	140
	Trade union militancy and the continuation of racism within the working class: 1910-1922	154
	The consolidation of racism in the trade unions: 1922- 1945	163
	Conclusions	170
Chapter 6	Racism, ‘black’ self-organisation and ‘inter-racial’ class action: 1945-1979	174
	A sectionalist trade union consciousness and racist action in trade unions	174
	‘Black’ self-organisation: the onset of anti-racist action in trade unions	184
	A corporate trade union consciousness and the formation of ‘inter-racial’ class action	190
	Conclusions	204
PART THREE	LABOUR AND RACISM: THE CONTEMPORARY RELATIONSHIP	
Chapter 7	‘Racial formation’ in local state trade unionism in the 1980s	209
	Anti-racist action in an era of neo-liberalism and weak class identity	212
	Local state trade unionism: NALGO	215
	Anti-racist action and the local state proletariat	219
	The opening-up of local state employment to ‘black’ workers	222
	‘Don’t discuss blacks behind our backs’: the struggle for ‘black’ self-organisation in NALGO	226
	The white rank and file backlash and the NEC re-asserts control	241
	Conclusions	255

Chapter 8	‘Racial formation’ in trade union branches in the 1990s: its origins, strengths and limitations	257
	Introduction	257
	The origins of ‘black’ self-organisation in Ealing and Camden NALGO	260
	Towards an ‘inter-racial’ coalition around a ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project	267
	Organised opposition to the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in Ealing and Camden NALGO	271
	Hillingdon NALGO: the dominance of the colour-blind perspective and its implications for anti-racist action	276
	The ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in Ealing and Camden NALGO: its strengths and successes	290
	The ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in Ealing and Camden NALGO: its limitations	300
	Conclusions	311
PART FOUR	ASSESSMENT	
Chapter 9	Conclusions	315
	Towards an alternative conceptual framework for understanding racist and anti-racist action in trade unions	315
	A sectionalist trade union consciousness and racist action in trade unions	319
	A corporate trade union consciousness and the formation of ‘inter-racial’ class action against racism	321
	Racism, anti-racism and the class struggle before ‘race relations’: the importance of a historical perspective	325
	Human agency and its role in understanding racist and anti-racist collective action	330
	‘Black’ self-organisation and anti-racist action in an era of neo-liberalism	336
References		341
Appendix		370

Acknowledgements

The writing of this dissertation was greatly assisted by the support of many friends and colleagues. I would especially like to thank Peter Fairbrother and John Wrench who provided guidance and intellectual engagement which led to significant improvements to the text.

I would also like to thank the participants of the international conference on ‘Racialising Class, Classifying Race: Labour and Difference in Africa, America and Britain’ (11-13th July 1997) held at St. Anthony’s College, University of Oxford, especially Peter Alexander, Rick Halpern and Neville Kirk whose comments on Chapter 6 of this volume were extremely valuable. Thanks are also due to Johan Wets, Patrick Pasture and Rinus Penninx and other participants of the international seminar on ‘Cultural Diversity in Trade Unions: A Challenge to Class Identity’ (6-7th February 1997) held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium for their comments on Chapters 7 and 8. A version of Chapter 3 was presented to the St. Catherine’s Conference on ‘An Asian Agenda for British Public Policy?’ (April 1997) where Avtar Brah and Sammit Saggar provided comments. A number of other colleagues and friends offered constructive advice on parts of the text including Bob Carter, Tariq Modood, Sheila Rowbotham and John Solomos.

Finally, much love and thanks to my parents and my wife Louise Rae.

Summary

In this dissertation, it is contended that existing theoretical frameworks for understanding racist and anti-racist action in trade unions are conceptually flawed. The primary function of a trade union is not to defend the interests of the whole working class as black radical theorists imply (see Sivanandan 1982; Gilroy 1987; Howe 1978) but rather the sectional interests of their members through the negotiation of improved pay and conditions within the confines laid down by the capitalist social formation (Hyman 1972; Clarke and Clements 1977; Kelly 1988). To enable the theorisation of anti-racist as well as racist action in trade unions, I also reject Phizacklea and Miles' (1980) uncritical use of the Leninist concept of trade union consciousness which leads them to associate racism with reformism and anti-racism with revolutionary social change. Instead, I recognise that trade union consciousness masks a range of different forms of reformist consciousness which include a sectionalist consciousness and a corporate consciousness.

Through a consideration of the relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker over the past two centuries, it is demonstrated that the black radical claim that the racist action of trade unionists was motivated by the economic benefits they accrued requires re-evaluation. First, it was mainly during periods where a weak class identity (i.e. a sectionalist trade union consciousness) prevailed that trade unionists employed racist exclusionary practices. Second, such action was not motivated by a recognition that it would result in economic gains at the expense of other groups of workers but rather marked an attempt to protect what little they had in a capitalist social formation that could never fully guarantee their economic security.

Importantly, this study establishes that during periods of acute class struggle and sustained strike action, the formation of a strong class identity (i.e. a corporate trade union consciousness) helped to undermine the prevalence of racism in trade unions and led to the development of an 'inter-racial' class solidarity where the advancement of sectional interests came to be perceived as being synonymous with the defence of general working class interests. Critical to the formation of this 'inter-racial' solidarity was the intervention of migrant workers and socialist activists.

Looking at the significance of 'black' self-organisation, both Gilroy (1982; 1987) and Miles (1984) incorrectly conceptualise it as representing a move away from class-based politics. Instead, this study demonstrates that self-organisation was key to the formation of an 'inter-racial' working class solidarity that developed during periods of acute class struggle. Their inability to adequately conceptualise 'black' self-activity lies in their failure to undertake a detailed assessment of the politics that inform such action. In redressing this weakness through a critical assessment of developments in one trade union - NALGO - it was established that self-organised groups were informed by two competing ideological perspectives: socialism and black nationalism. It was the dominance of the former current within these groups that persuaded a significant layer of 'white' activist opinion to support the principle of 'black' self-organisation which ensured that racism continued to be challenged during a period characterised by the widespread prevalence of a weak class identity and with organised labour in retreat.

Abbreviations

AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AMA	Association of Metropolitan Authorities
ANL	Anti-Nazi League
APEX	Association of Professional, Executive and Engineering Staff
ASCJ	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
ASRS	Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants
AUFW	Associated Union of Foundry Workers
BBL	British Brothers League
BEC	Branch Executive Committee
BIFU	Banking, Insurance and Finance Union
BLU	Builders and Labourers' Union
BPA	Black People's Alliance
BSF	British Shipping Federation
BUF	British Union of Fascists
BUFP	Black Unity and Freedom Party
CARD	Campaign Against Racial Discrimination
CARF	Campaign Against Racism and Fascism
CBWG	Camden Black Workers Group
CCCS	Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees
CP	Conservative Party
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPSA	Civil and Public Servants Association
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DWRGLU	Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union
EBN	Ealing Black NALGO
GLC	Greater London Council
GLCARTUG	Greater London Council Anti-Racist Trade Union Group
GMWU/ GMBATU	General and Municipal Workers Union
GNCTU	Grand National Consolidated Trade Union
GRWU	General Railway Workers Union
GWGLU	Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IS/SWP	International Socialists/Socialist Workers Party
ITWU	Irish Transport Workers Union
IWA-GB	Indian Workers Association - Great Britain
IWMA	International Working Men's Association
JPCAFAS	Jewish People's Council Against Fascism and Anti- Semitism
JSM	Jewish ex-Servicemen's Movement

LTC	London Trades Council
LTE	London Transport Executive
LPL	Labour Protection League
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
LWMA	London Working Men's Association
MFGB	Miners Federation of Great Britain
MM	Minority Movement
NALGO	National and Local Government Officers' Association
NAPL	National Association for the Protection of Labour
NATHFE	National Association of Teachers in Higher and Further Education
NBMCC	National Black Members' Co-ordinating Committee
NCTUAR	National Committee for Trade Unions Against Racism
NEC	National Executive Council
NF	National Front
NFLA	National Free Labour Association
NHS	National Health Service
NJC	National Jewish Committee
NMP	Newham Monitoring Project
NSFU	National Seafarer's and Fireman's Union
NUCPS/ SCPS	National Union of Civil and Public Servants/ Society of Civil and Public Servants

NUDL	National Union of Dock Labourers
NUHKW	National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers
NUM	National Union of Miners
NUS	National Union of Seamen
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OPCS	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys
OWAAD	Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent
PAIN	Positive Action in NALGO
PAWP	Positive Action Working Party
RAAS	Racial Action Adjustment Society
RAR	Rock Against Racism
REWP	Race Equality Working Party
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SL	Socialist League
SMG	Southall Monitoring Group
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UCPA	Universal Coloured People's Association
UPW	Union of Post Office Workers
URTU	United Road Transport Union

PART ONE

THEORIES, CONTEXT, METHODS

1 Introduction

This study considers the significance of racism and anti-racism in English trade unions. Although much has been written describing the instigation of discriminatory practices by trade unionists against ‘non-white’ workers, there is a distinct paucity of theoretically-informed work offering an explanation for such actions. One set of notable exceptions include black radical theorists such as Sivanandan (1982) and Gilroy (1987) who argue that the racist actions of trade unionists were motivated by the economic and ideological benefits they accrued. Arising from this critique, these writers drew two important conclusions regarding anti-racist political practice. First, the racist actions of trade unionists demonstrated that the organised working class could no longer be viewed as an agency that was capable of engaging in ‘inter-racial’ class action to combat racism. Second, an alternative agency was identified as capable of organising effective resistance against racism: the ‘black’ working class comprising people of South Asian and Caribbean descent¹.

This study shows that the black radical critique is built on the mistaken assumption that the primary function of a trade union is to represent the interests of the whole working class (Sivanandan 1976; Sivanandan 1982). Rather, trade unions are organisations

¹ Whilst it is recognised that the black radical tradition is not monolithic but refers to ‘many diverse and, indeed, contradictory strands’ (Miles, 1993: 45) when it comes to their analysis of trade union racism, differences are negligible between authors working in this tradition. In fact, the only point of difference is that unlike Sivanandan (1982), Gilroy (1987) extends ‘black’ unity to encompass ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ of different social classes.

whose primary role is to defend the interests of their members (Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988) through the negotiation of improved pay and conditions. Further, these bodies carry out this task firmly within the confines of the capitalist social formation, that is, they are informed by a reformist, not a revolutionary will.

To advance their aim of improving the pay and conditions of their members within the confines of the capitalist social formation, English trade unions have available to them a range of strategies that will not only defend the economic interests of their members against capital, but may do so at the expense of groups of workers not in the industry. Herein lies the basis of an explanation that can be developed about why trade unions engage in racism and exclusionary practices.

Since trade unions are not socialist organisations imbued with a radical class consciousness that emphasises working class solidarity but rather sectionalist organisations imbued with a reformist trade union consciousness, they do, on occasions, employ restrictive practices against those elements of the working class they consider to be an economic threat to their members². Such action is not motivated by a recognition that it will result in economic gains for their members at the expense of other groups of workers (although marginal economic gain may be a by-product of such action) but rather marks an attempt to protect what little they have in a capitalist social formation that can never fully guarantee their economic security. Whilst such exclusionary practices may not be in the ‘true’ or ‘real’ interests of this element of the

² Throughout this study, the term exclusionary practices will be employed to distinguish restrictive practices that are motivated by racism from those that are not.

working class in so far as they would stand to economically benefit more through united action (see Du Bois 1969; Reich 1971; Perlo 1975; Symanski 1976), according to the limited outlook that motivates trade union behaviour, that is, the defence of member interests within capitalism, they often come to the conclusion that exclusionary practices represent the best means by which to pursue this specific goal.

The theoretical framework that Miles and Phizacklea (1977b; 1978; see also Phizacklea and Miles 1980) employ to analyse racist and anti-racist action in trade unions is relatively more robust than the black radical theory of trade union racism. Particular strengths include their recognition that the primary function of trade unions is to represent the interests of their members and *not* the whole working class and that the expression of trade union racism has its origins in their reformist outlook that subordinates international working class interests to national ones (Miles and Phizacklea 1977b).

However, Miles and Phizacklea (1977b; 1978) are unable to accommodate within their theoretical framework the anti-racist action pursued by the TUC and affiliated unions which they themselves first identified (Miles and Phizacklea 1978). The roots of their failure to theorise such anti-racist action lies in their uncritical adoption of Lenin's (1976) inflexible and polarised association of trade union consciousness with a restricted class consciousness and reformism, and a revolutionary class consciousness with radical social change (Phizacklea and Miles 1980). This understanding of trade union consciousness leads Phizacklea and Miles (1980) to employ an equally inflexible

dualism where racist action is associated with a trade union consciousness and reformism, and anti-racist action with a revolutionary consciousness and radical social change. Neo-Marxist analyses of trade unionism (see for example Anderson 1977; Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988) suggest that the Leninist concept of trade union consciousness masks a range of different forms of reformist consciousness at work, of which the two most important include a sectionalist and corporatist consciousness (Kelly 1988). A sectionalist consciousness arises where workers identify themselves and their interests primarily with a section of their class with whom they have an immediate interest. This may encompass only those colleagues at their immediate place of work, also referred to as a factory consciousness (see Beynon 1984), or it may include all individuals that work in their industry. A corporate consciousness is where workers identify themselves and their interests with the corporate body and the interests of the working class as a whole within capitalism.

This alternative conceptualisation of working class consciousness at work creates the theoretical space to explain both racist and anti-racist action in trade unions whilst maintaining an understanding of them as essentially reformist organisations whose primary aim is to defend member interests within the confines laid down by the capitalist social formation. Hence, the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness where the pursuit of sectional interests is perceived to coincide with the pursuit of aggregate working class interests would be compatible with the development of 'inter-racial' class action. An important question arising from this discussion is

under what sorts of economic, political and ideological conditions would this form of trade union consciousness be likely to develop?

In answering this question, the work of the German Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg (1994) is especially pertinent. Luxemburg (1994: 153-218) observed that there were phases in the class struggle between capital and labour, particularly when the state played a highly interventionist role against strike action, that helped to cohere the working class and led to the formation of a militant trade union consciousness. Applying this insight to the study of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions opens up the theoretical possibility that during periods of intense class struggle, a process of 'inter-racial' class solidarity could emerge which negates the racism that normally inhibits the formation of such action.

Utilising this alternative conceptual framework, I investigate the relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker in England since the rise of the capitalist social formation during the late eighteenth century (Hobsbawm 1990; Thompson 1991; Morton 1994). Through a combination of primary research, including in-depth interviews and documentary research, and a detailed critique of existing work, this study considers:

i. under what economic, political and ideological conditions did elements of organised labour engage in racism and exclusionary practices?

- ii. under what economic, political and ideological conditions did resistance to such racism and exclusionary practices emerge, and what precise organisational form did it take?
- iii. what were the strengths and limitations of such anti-racist action in trade unions?
- iv. what implications does this evidence have for questions relating to 'racial formation' and 'inter-racial' working class agency raised by black radical and Marxist social theory?

A note on concepts used throughout the study

In addition to those concepts already defined in the course of the preceding discussion, there are a number of other concepts that require a brief explanation at this stage. Following de Ste. Croix (1981: 43), I employ the term class in its Marxian sense to denote:

...a group of persons in a community identified by their position in the whole system of social production, defined above all according to their relationship (primarily in terms of the degree of ownership or control) to the conditions of production (that is to say, the means and labour of production) and to other classes.

Whilst I recognise the existence of other social classes in capitalist social formations, particularly the petit-bourgeoisie (see the papers in Bechhofer and Elliot 1981), this

study concentrates its attention on the primary fault-line between the dominant capitalist class and the working class defined here as all those workers 'whose livelihood depends on a wage relationship with employers of labour power, and who therefore produce surplus value in the process of commodity production' (Draper 1978: 34) and 'those who are dominated by managers in the tasks of pumping it [i.e. surplus value] around the system' (Gubbay 1997: 86), including those involved in banking, commercial and property capital (Gubbay 1997: 85). According to Marx and Engels (1977), the driving force of all hitherto existing societies, including capitalist social formations, is the class struggle defined in this study as the 'fundamental relationship between classes, involving exploitation or resistance to it' (De. Ste. Croix 1981: 44). However, as Draper (1978: 42) usefully points out:

To engage in class struggle it is not necessary to "believe in" the class struggle any more than it is necessary to believe in Newton in order to fall from an airplane...The working class moves toward class struggle insofar as capitalism fails to satisfy its economic and social needs and aspirations, not insofar as it is told to struggle by Marxists. There is no evidence that workers like to struggle any more than anyone else; the evidence is that capitalism compels and accustoms them to do so.

The working class in capitalist social formations never exists as a unitary structural and ideological entity but instead is characterised by important discontinuities (Hyman

1972). Of particular importance to this study are the inter-related processes of racialisation and racism (Miles 1982; 1993). Racialisation is used here to refer to a

...dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically (Miles 1989: 76).

It is this process of racialisation that ensures that under particular historical circumstances, certain social groups come to be subject to exclusionary practices, in part, motivated by racism which Miles (1982: 78-79) defines narrowly as:

...those negative beliefs held by one group which identify and set apart another by attributing significance to some biological or other 'inherent' characteristic(s) which it is said to possess, and which deterministically associate that characteristic(s) with some other (negatively evaluated) feature(s) or action(s).

Following Miles' (1982; 1993) lead, I reject the black radical and weberian 'race relations' paradigms (see Rex 1970; Gilroy 1987) that conceptualise racism narrowly with the negative signification of a 'non-white' skin colour and argue that in particular historical circumstances, 'white' social groups have also been the subject of racialisation and racism in England, including the Irish and the Jews. Although I also

concur with Miles' (1982) observation that the concept of 'race' has no descriptive or analytical value, I do utilise the concept of 'racial formation' (see Omi and Winant 1986; Gilroy 1987) to denote how, under particular political and historical circumstances, social groups subjected to the processes of racialisation and racism can appropriate ascribed 'racial' identities and use them to forge an imagined 'racial' community to combat racism.

Throughout the study, I employ the terms 'black' and 'white' to distinguish between different elements of the English working class. Where necessary, I also distinguish between different 'non-white' groups by using the terms 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean'. That all these terms are social constructions and not 'objective' categories is captured in the controversy in the USA and Britain over self-categorisation (see Davis 1991; Roediger 1994; Miles 1993; Modood 1994). However, whilst the purpose of enclosing these terms in inverted commas is to highlight their problematical scientific status (Miles 1982; 1989; 1993), it is not my intention to render illegitimate the anti-racist action that has been undertaken using such a nomenclature and that will form the focus of much of this study.

Structure of the study

In Chapter 2, I consider the ways in which three theoretical perspectives - weberian (Rex and Tomlinson 1979), black radical (Gilroy 1982; 1987) and neo-Marxist (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982; 1989) - attempt to explain the basis of

working class racism, its impact on the position of 'non-white' social groups in class relations and the implications of this class position on the potential for 'inter-racial' working class action.

The chapter demonstrates that despite their different theoretical starting points, both the weberian analysis of Rex and Tomlinson (1979) and the black radical analysis of Gilroy (1982; 1987) come to argue that the origins of working class racism lay in the economic and ideological benefits they accrued. Further, both perspectives go on to conclude that this racism created an irreversible fracture within the English working class which eliminated any possibility of 'inter-racial' class action. In the absence of 'white' working class support, Rex and Tomlinson (1979) go on to predict that anti-racist action would take the form of 'ethnic formation' where 'South Asians' and 'Caribbeans' would engage in separate struggles. Conversely, Gilroy (1987) suggests these two social groups united across different social classes in a process of 'racial formation'.

The chapter shows that these conclusions are challenged by neo-Marxist work from America (Du Bois 1969; Reich 1971; Perlo 1975; Symanski 1976) and Britain (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982; 1989; 1993) which demonstrates that 'white' workers did not economically benefit from racism and that its expression in post-war England was more accurately understood as representing a response by 'white' workers to their sense of powerlessness to alter the declining socio-economic circumstances they found themselves in as a result of the re-structuring of the English social

formation. Significantly, whilst acknowledging that ‘non-white’ social groups were forced to organise independently to challenge the racism of ‘white’ workers, only the neo-Marxists Phizacklea and Miles (1980) leave open the possibility that ‘white’ workers could also combat racism alongside ‘non-white’ workers because of their continuing joint location within the boundaries of the working class (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982; 1989).

Chapter 3 demonstrates that whilst Gilroy (1987) accurately identified that racism was most likely to be tackled through the process of ‘racial formation’ in the 1960s and 1970s where ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ of different social classes united around the identity of ‘black’, he failed to map the precise circumstances under which such action arose. Through a detailed consideration of the economic, political and ideological circumstances amidst which the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project flourished and subsequently declined between the 1960s and 1990s, it is shown that Gilroy was incorrect in claiming that this form of anti-racist action could not be theorised and accommodated within a neo-Marxist framework.

Chapter 4 offers a critical assessment of black radical (Sivanandan 1976; 1977; 1982; Howe 1978; Gilroy 1982; 1987) and neo-Marxist (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; 1987; Miles and Phizacklea 1977b; 1978) approaches to understanding racist and anti-racist action in one working class institution - the trade unions. It contends that these approaches, whilst useful, do not constitute a viable conceptual framework to investigate the aims of this study. An alternative conceptual framework is proposed

which seeks to ground an explanation of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions in the role they play as organisations whose primary function is to improve the pay and conditions of their membership within the confines of a capitalist social formation. The chapter concludes with an outline of how this conceptual framework will be used to explore the relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker over the past two centuries in England.

Chapter 5 focuses on an important silence in sociological understanding regarding the historical relationship (1800-1945) between organised labour and the migrant worker. It demonstrates that racism has been a feature of the organised labour movement since its inception. However, the articulation of racism was also uneven across the working class, being most prevalent amongst those groups of workers who found themselves in direct economic competition with migrant labour. Importantly, the chapter identifies a current of 'inter-racial' class solidarity, arising particularly during periods of intense class struggle involving large elements of organised labour taking strike action. It was under these social conditions, where the construction of a strong class identity was paramount if strike action was to prove successful, that racism lost its purchase and was negated.

Chapter 6 turns its attention to the period between 1945-79 (a period on which black radical and neo-Marxist theorists have focused on), to see what new light can be shed on understanding the relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker using the alternative conceptual framework proposed. As well as deepening and

extending our understanding of the economic, political and ideological circumstances which led the TUC to alter its policy towards 'black' workers, this chapter demonstrates that the conclusions drawn by black radical theorists regarding the basis of working class racism, 'black' self-organisation and 'inter-racial' class action are in need of re-evaluation.

Through an in-depth analysis of events within one trade union - the National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO) - Chapters 7 and 8 investigate racist and anti-racist action in the 1980s and 1990s, a period which has been the subject of little academic attention.

Chapter 7 considers the ways in which debate about anti-racist action in NALGO was transformed in the immediate aftermath of the urban unrest in the early 1980s when growing numbers of 'black' workers entered non-manual local state employment for the first time. It critically discusses the two currents of anti-racist opinion that developed and the ways in which they proposed to combat racism. On the one hand, there were the 'black' activists who believed that racism would be most effectively combatted through 'black' self-organisation within NALGO where those who were subjected to racism were given a pre-eminent right in determining how it was to be tackled. On the other hand, the union's leadership advocated an alternative strategy to combat racism that was based on the twin ideological considerations of ensuring that whilst 'black' workers had an important say in anti-racist policy formulation, the resultant policies and action would have to secure majority 'white' support.

Chapter 8 focuses on the impact of ‘black’ members’ groups at a branch level. It finds that these groups were informed by two ideological perspectives: socialism and black nationalism. The chapter shows that it was the strength of ‘black’ rank and file support for socialist activists within these groups and their commitment to the traditional principles of trade unionism that persuaded a significant layer of ‘white’ activist opinion to lend their support to the principle of ‘black’ self-organisation. The establishment of this ‘inter-racial’ coalition was also critical in ensuring that racism was more effectively tackled than when ‘black’ self-organisation was fractured into its constituent ‘ethnic’ parts. Whilst this anti-racist strategy was not without its limitations, there is little doubt that during a period which saw organised labour in retreat and the decline of a strong class identity, the establishment of an ‘inter-racial’ coalition around a ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project did ensure anti-racist action remained on the trade union agenda.

The study concludes with Chapter 9 where an assessment of the study’s central findings is undertaken to see what implications they have for existing conceptualisations of ‘racial formation’ and ‘inter-racial’ class-based action.

2 Racism, working class agency and anti-racist action

Introduction

According to the classical Marxist account of societal development, the primary driving force of all societies is the class struggle (Marx and Engels 1977). Within capitalist social formations, the class struggle is played out between two distinct and antagonistic classes: the working class and a capitalist ruling class. Marx and Engels (1977) claimed that the inherently unstable nature of the capitalist mode of production would contribute to the growing immiserisation of the working class. Realising that their economic well-being could not be guaranteed under such an economic system, the working class would resist through collective action. It was in the course of such collective action that Marx and Engels (1977) envisaged the working class would transform itself from a ‘class in itself’ to a ‘class for itself’ and carry out its historical mission as the ‘gravedigger’ of capitalism and the agency of radical social transformation.

A cursory glance at events during the second half of the twentieth century suggests that, apart from a major period of student and working class unrest during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Hyman 1972; Harman 1988), capitalist economies in western Europe have been characterised by a remarkable period of social and economic stability. A plethora of explanations have been advanced to explain the ‘failure’ of the Marxian project of working class-led social change to materialise in these countries including their capacity

to undergo regular periods of economic expansion and thereby meet the instrumental needs of the working class (Dahrendorf 1959; Bell 1960; Zweig 1961); divisions within the working class caused by sexism, occupation and skill differences (Hyman 1972; Mann 1973; Boston 1987; Lockwood 1989); and the disappearance of the working class altogether (Gorz 1982).

This chapter considers to what extent racism has affected working class formation in England. In particular, it has four distinct aims. First, it critically assesses the basis of racism within the ‘white’ working class. Second, it investigates what impact racism and exclusionary practices had on the position of ‘non-white’ social groups in class relations. Third, it discusses the implications of such a class position on the potential for ‘inter-racial’ working class action and fourth, it considers those alternative agencies that have been identified as being more likely to combat racism than the working class.

The weberian perspective: John Rex and colleagues

John Rex, along with Michael Banton (1967; 1987) are commonly regarded as the two founding fathers of the sociology of ‘race relations’ in Britain (Solomos 1993). Over a period of three decades, Rex’s writings (Rex 1970; 1973; 1979; 1986a; 1986b; 1991; Rex and Moore 1967; Rex and Tomlinson 1979) have had a profound bearing on the direction and development of ‘race relations’ research in both the academic and public policy formation arenas (see Solomos and Back 1995). To this day, his body of work

represents the most sustained critique of British racialised relations from an explicitly weberian perspective (Rex 1986a).

Racism, class relations and working class agency

In the influential work by Rex and Tomlinson entitled ‘Colonial Immigrants in a British City’ (1979), they develop a persuasive argument about the social location of people of ‘South Asian’ and ‘Caribbean’ descent. The study looked at employment, housing and education in the area of Handsworth, Birmingham.

The empirical findings demonstrated that these ‘non-white’ groups were significantly less likely to be represented in white-collar employment than ‘whites’; significantly more likely to be represented in semi- and unskilled work and when industrial and occupational differences were explored within these broad categories, they found that:

...the West Indian and Asian populations are more concentrated in labouring jobs and in hot and dirty industries, and are poorly represented in professional, scientific and administrative jobs (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 279).

Furthermore, both ‘West Indians’ and ‘Asians’ worked extra hours to earn the same money as ‘whites’; were more likely to be on shift work; and, were also more likely to be unemployed (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: Chapter 4). Such a position of marked inequality in life chances led Rex and Tomlinson to argue that Britain was characterised

by a dual labour market (Doeringer and Piore 1971) where 'non-whites' occupied positions in the 'periphery' sector of the labour market characterised by poorly-paid, insecure jobs whilst 'white' workers occupied positions in the 'core' sector characterised by high-paid, secure jobs. When Rex and Tomlinson looked at the two other areas of resource allocation - housing and education - they found a similar pattern of inequality, with 'West Indians' and 'Asians' over-represented in poor quality housing in inner city areas and their children attending the poorest schools in almost wholly segregated environments (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: Chapters 5 and 6). This analysis led them to draw the following conclusion:

...the differences between the minorities and the working class are not simply quantitative but qualitative and structural, with the immigrant situation being characterised by a different kind of position in the labour market, a different housing situation, and a different form of schooling (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 275-276).

An important question arising from these findings was how had such a process of inequality come to be historically constituted? According to Rex and Tomlinson (1979: 285-286), the starting point for an explanation of the differential position in class relations of 'white' and 'non-white' groups lay in the economic gains achieved by British capital through its involvement in the slave trade and colonialism. This meant that when demands for a welfare capitalism arose after World War Two (WW2), British capital was able to meet them through a re-deployment of the historical appropriation of

wealth from different parts of the world and its continuing favourable economic relationship to dependent colonies:

... the whole development of British industrial capitalism depended upon a process of capital accumulation in India and the West Indies, and that in later times the capacity of British capitalism to meet the costs of the welfare state rested, at least in part, upon the unequal trade which Britain was able to carry on with the rest of the world (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 285-286).

The demands for a welfare capitalism, were instigated by the institutions of the 'white' working class such as the Labour Party, which, according to Rex and Tomlinson (1979: 8), was increasingly seen as one of the two main parties of government after WW2, enabling it to wrest key economic benefits for its constituency:

Not merely is it in a position to interfere with the operations of the free capitalist economy in the workers' interests, but it has also succeeded through the creation of welfare services, in providing the worker with a social wage over and above the wage which he obtains from his employer.

The wresting of economic gains had major ideological ramifications on the class struggle: specifically, it engendered what they refer to as a 'class truce' between the 'white' working class and British capital where 'the existence of social benefits makes common citizenship a far more important basis of allegiance than purely class solidarity'

(Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 9). Significantly, they claimed this inter-class 'racial' alliance institutionalised a permanent racist chasm in the working class such that:

...the question of the absorption of immigrant minorities into the working class has been settled against absorption, with the native working class rejecting black immigrants and uniting with other indigenous classes against them (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 276).

In an attempt to grasp the impact racism and exclusionary practices had on working class formation, especially the manner in which it served to place 'non-whites' in a qualitatively inferior position in class relations to that of the 'white' working class, Rex and Tomlinson contended that 'non-white' social groups should no longer be conceived of as part of the working class but an underclass:

The concept of underclass was intended to suggest ...that these minorities were systematically at a disadvantage compared with working class whites and that, instead of identifying with working class culture, community and politics, they formed their own organisation and became in effect a separate underprivileged class (Rex and Tomlinson (1979: 275).

Combatting racism through 'ethnic formation'

With the possibility of 'inter-racial' working class action ruled out in their schema (Rex and Tomlinson 1979; see also Rex 1986a: 62-67), Rex and Tomlinson (1979) predicted (and arguably even commended (see Solomos and Back 1995)) that resistance to racism would take the form of 'ethnic' self organisation. For Rex and Tomlinson (1979), the notion of an 'ethnic' community with its strong bonds with fellow members was 'more likely to provide the means of group action than any industrially-based grouping' (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 24). Importantly, they argued that 'South Asians' and 'Caribbeans' - the two 'ethnic' groups in their schema - would employ quite different strategies to redress the impact of racism. In the 'South Asian' communities, this would take

...the form of defensive organisation within which individuals may aim at capital accumulation and social mobility; in the West Indian community it may take the form of withdrawal from competition altogether with emphasis upon the formation of a black identity... (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 276).

Hence, no 'South Asian'/'Caribbean' alliance was envisaged but rather two separate yet simultaneous struggles against the impact of racism and exclusionary practices with each 'ethnic' group constituting itself as a discrete social class articulating distinctive political interests. Whilst 'South Asian' political mobilisation would lead to growing negotiation with the local and central state with the aim of securing greater resources and social and political rights, 'Caribbean' political mobilisation would increasingly be

characterised by a withdrawal from negotiations with the state as a result of the rising levels of unemployment and criminalisation of ‘Caribbean’ youth in the inner-cities. Importantly, for Rex and Tomlinson (1979: 33) this ‘Caribbean’ strategy of resistance would be informed by a black radical consciousness drawing its inspiration from rastafarianism, revolutionary black nationalism and the struggles of ‘blacks’ in the Third World to free themselves of oppression.

A critique of the weberian perspective

The work of Rex has generated a great deal of controversy and criticism amongst scholars (see Bourne 1980; Gilroy 1980; Lawrence 1982; Miles 1982). However, I wish to critically evaluate Rex’s work only in so far as it relates directly to the aims outlined earlier in the chapter. The major weaknesses in Rex’s argument arise from his use of the concept of ‘race’ in analysis and description (Miles 1982). Whilst Rex (1970) makes clear there are no biological underpinnings to his use of the term ‘race’, he justifies its use on the grounds that it continues to be utilised in everyday discourse as a basis for social action:

Social categories depend for their existence on the subjective definition given to them by social actors. Race is no exception. So long as it exists in the minds of men there will be race relations problems to study (Rex 1970: 192).

Such a defence of the 'race' concept is rooted in his approach to understanding social structure, especially his employment of the weberian method of verstehen (Rex and Tomlinson 1979). Verstehen has been defined by one of its leading exponents as:

...the attempt to comprehend social action through a kind of empathetic liaison with the actor on the part of the observer. The strategy is for the investigator to try to identify with the actor and his motives and to view the course of conduct through the actor's eyes rather than his own (Parkin 1982: 19).

The implications of such an approach are also made explicit by Parkin (1982: 26):

If the actor's own meanings and perceptions of reality are an important ingredient in the explanation of conduct, these meanings and perceptions must be treated as social facts in their own right.

It is by adopting this method that Rex is able to go on and conceptualise 'non-whites' and 'whites' as constituting discrete and antagonistic 'racial' classes (in the weberian sense), with the inferior position of 'non-white' social groups in class relations the result solely of 'racial' discrimination. However, such a theoretical framework rules out by the very concepts it employs any consideration of the ways in which other factors including the migrant class status of 'nono-white' groups, their residential location or gender (Virdee 1999) may interact with exclusionary practices motivated by racism in

determining their position in class relations (Miles 1982). As Miles (1982: 37) makes clear:

Racism and racial discrimination do not occur in a vacuum, but have their place in a certain sort of society in certain sorts of circumstances. These phenomena cannot be conceived of as the prime determinants of the situation and experience of 'colonial immigrants' without first developing an analytical framework which permits an analysis of that context.

Relatedly, Rex and Tomlinson's (1979) prediction that 'ethnic formation' would be the most likely form that anti-racist action would take in Britain whilst insightful, fails to pay due consideration to the other strategies that may be available to 'non-white' social groups. The roots of this failure lie again in their use of an unnecessarily restrictive framework where 'non-whites' and 'whites' are conceptualised as constituting discrete and antagonistic 'racial' classes. Such a framework prevents any exploration of possible continuities that may exist between 'non-white' workers and 'white' workers arising, for example, from their common exploitation as wage labourers in a capitalist social formation (Miles 1982). This shared position in the capitalist social formation not only creates the possibility for 'inter-racial' class action on 'non-racial' issues but also over racism.

The black radical perspective: Paul Gilroy

In the early 1980s, some of the central tenets of the weberian perspective of John Rex and his associates came under question from two intellectual fronts: the black radical perspective of Paul Gilroy (1982; 1987) which is considered below and the neo-Marxist perspective of Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982; 1993) which is considered immediately after.

Racism and 'inter-racial' class action

Paul Gilroy's work, especially during the 1980s (Gilroy 1980; 1981/82; 1982; 1987; 1990b) represents the most influential discussion of the impact of racism on working class agency from a black radical perspective (Robinson 1983). Like Rex and Tomlinson (1979), Gilroy (1981/82; 1982; 1987) asserts that the origins of a racist division within the working class lay in the central role played by Britain in the slave trade and colonialism. One of his central arguments is that the working class accrued direct economic benefits from this experience and those benefits continue to be maintained in the contemporary social formation as evidenced by the relatively better socio-economic position of 'white' workers compared to the racialised fraction of the working class (Gilroy 1987: 246). Importantly for Gilroy, this process of material betterment was accompanied by the discourse of nationalism, intimately entwined with the ideology of racism, so that in the present social formation, 'white' workers' allegiance to 'race' and nation overrides what ought to be their objective allegiance to fellow class members subjected to the social and historical process of racialisation:

It may be that the benefits of imperialism have determined that ‘the people’ will always tend towards ‘the race’ in this country, at any rate ‘The British Nation’ and ‘The Island Race’ have historically failed to, and cannot at present, incorporate black people. Indeed their alienness and externality to all things British and beautiful make it hard to imagine any such discourse which could accommodate their presence in a positive manner and retain its popular character. The popular discourse of the nation operates across the formal lines of class, and has been constructed *against* blacks (Gilroy 1982: 278).

Central to the construction and maintenance of this racist division within the working class have been the ‘institutions of the white working class’ which have a proven history of racism:

There is overwhelming evidence to support the view that the institutions of the white working class have failed to represent the interests of black workers, both abroad and at home, where black rank-and-file organisation has challenged local union and national union bureaucracy since the day the ‘Empire Windrush’ docked (Gilroy 1982: 305).

For Gilroy, these historical and contemporary developments have major implications for anti-racist action using forms of political practice based upon working class unity. When taken together they amount to the institutionalisation of a chasm, one that, in his view, is

in all likelihood permanent, between members of the working class who are 'white' and those who are not. Hence, despite diametrically opposed conceptual starting points, Gilroy comes to a remarkably similar conclusion to that drawn by Rex and Tomlinson (1979): that the economic and ideological benefits of racism accrued by the 'white' working class make the development of a process of 'inter-racial' class action highly remote. The end result of this process of economic, political and ideological production is that the 'white' working class in Britain can no longer be conceived of as representing the key agency of radical social transformation as envisaged by Marx:

The proletariat of yesterday, classically conceived or otherwise, now has rather more to lose than its chains. The real gains which it has made have been achieved at the cost of a deep-seated accommodation with capital and the political institutions of corporatism. Its will, as Calhoun has also pointed out 'is apt to be a reformist will' (Gilroy 1987: 246).

Combatting racism through 'racial formation'

Gilroy (1982; 1987) alleges that in the absence of 'white' working class support, 'non-white' workers were forced to combat racism alone. Importantly, in the course of such independent anti-racist action, he contends that 'race' becomes a 'political category that can accommodate various meanings which are in turn determined by struggle' (Gilroy 1987: 38). During the 1960s and 1970s, the outcome of this process was that 'non-white' activists appropriated the imposed 'racial' identity of 'black' and infused it with

new meaning and significance through which emerged 'black' communities of resistance (Sivanandan 1990) - a process Gilroy (1987: 38-40) defines as 'race formation'¹. Significantly, and in opposition to Rex and Tomlinson's (1979) assertion that such anti-racist action would take the form of 'ethnic' self-organisation, Gilroy (1987) alleges that this action was characterised by both joint 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' involvement and cross-class collaboration within these communities (Gilroy 1982: 285-286; Gilroy 1987: 24; Gilroy 1993: 32; 93; see also Moore 1975; Sivanandan 1982).

The identification of this process of 'racial formation' leads Gilroy to re-conceptualise the relationship between racism, working class agency and anti-racist action. Specifically, he asserts (Gilroy 1987: 19) that:

...the class struggle between capital and labour can no longer by itself generate a complete account of the struggles through which the social movement of blacks dissolves and then transcends the formal divisions of class.

Drawing on social movement theory from western Europe (e.g. Touraine 1977; Melucci 1980; and Castells 1983), Gilroy argues that the 'black struggle' against racism represents one of the burgeoning social movements alongside those of the feminist, ecology and youth movements which had witnessed a rapid growth in the late 1970s

¹ See also Omi and Winant (1986) who describe a similar process in America as 'racial formation'.

amidst the decaying industrial order of western capitalist economies. These social movements, characterised by organisational methods that relied less on mass membership (like trade unions) and more on mass participation, had the advantage of 'autonomy from capitalist command as well as from the disabling perspectives of the labour movement' (Gilroy (1982: 215).

Consequently, in Gilroy's schema, the traditional class struggle between capital and labour is superseded by a class struggle, or more appropriately a 'race' struggle (see Miles 1993: 3-4) that is more fractured and localised arising out of the concerns of citizens to take more control of their local surroundings (Gilroy 1987: 224):

Unable to control the social relations in which they find themselves, people have shrunk the world to the size of their communities and begun to act politically on that basis (Gilroy 1987: 245).

This alternative conceptualisation leads Gilroy to make explicit his break with a historical materialist analysis of racism and working class agency:

If these struggles (some of which are conducted in and through 'race') are to be called class struggles, then class analysis must itself be thoroughly overhauled. I am not sure whether the labour involved in doing so makes it either a possible or a desirable task (Gilroy 1987: 245).

A critique of the black radical perspective

Gilroy's work has had a major impact on scholars working not only within sociology but also the related disciplines of social anthropology and cultural studies (see for example Back 1996). Yet, whilst his work has been the subject of extensive debate, much of it has tended to concentrate on Gilroy's analysis of 'black' expressive cultures rather than his analysis of the impact of racism on working class formation (for exceptions to this general trend, see Miles 1984; Miles 1987a; Miles 1993 and Small 1994).

In this part of the chapter, I discuss what I consider to be some of the limitations of Gilroy's theoretical framework. The first concerns his problematical understanding and usage of key Marxist concepts. This is not a pedantic point about terminology but brings into question the conclusions he draws about racism and working class agency. In particular, his conceptualisation of the working class is highly problematical. In his influential work entitled 'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack' (1987), he makes an a priori assumption that the working class is comprised solely of skilled manual workers (see Gilroy 1987: 18). No theoretical justification is provided in support of such an assumption nor why other groups of wage labourers such as low-grade non-manual workers are considered not to be members of the working class in his schema.

In classical Marxist social theory, no a priori assumption is made that only skilled blue collar workers constitute members of the working class. Instead, class position is determined by the relationship to the means of production (see Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Callinicos 1983). Draper (1978: 34) argues that:

In Marx's theory, the proletariat is the working class peculiar to capitalist relations of production. It does not comprise all who work for a living, or who do useful or necessary work. It consists of workers whose livelihood depends on a wage relationship with employers of labour power, and who therefore produce surplus value in the process of commodity production.

It is only on the basis of this analytical conceptualisation that one can begin to empirically establish and then categorise whether particular forms of employment and the individuals working within them form part of the working class. For over a quarter of a century, research evidence has strongly indicated that in the advanced capitalist formations of western Europe and north America, people in key forms of non-manual employment such as clerical work have been subjected to a process of proletarianisation (Braverman 1974), leading some authors to categorise them as the 'new working class' (see the collection of papers in Hyman and Price 1983; Crompton and Jones 1984). Hence, despite changes in the type and form of employment through time, capitalist social formations remain characterised by a major class cleavage between those who are working class (blue collar and increasingly white collar) and those who are members of a capitalist class. This is not to deny that major changes have not taken place in the class structure of contemporary British society. It is clear, for example, that recent years have witnessed a dramatic growth in the petty-bourgeoisie (see Curran and Blackburn 1991) and the increasing emergence of a layer of professional workers that some have referred to as the 'new middle class' (see Carter 1979; 1995). The implications of this work on

the class structure is that it brings into serious question some of the conclusions drawn by Gilroy about the working class. Most importantly, his analysis of working class racism is immediately rendered problematic because it represents an analysis of only one part of the contemporary English working class and a part that is increasingly marginal in numerical terms (Marshall et al 1988).

I now want to explore Gilroy's (1987) argument that the origins of working class racism lay in the economic and ideological benefits they accrued. In Gilroy's schema, the 'white' working class were an active agent in the manufacture of a racist fracture within the working class and the location of 'non-white' social groups at the bottom of the British class structure constitutes evidence of the ways in which 'white' workers continue to economically benefit from racism and exclusionary practices (Gilroy 1982; Gilroy 1987).

Gilroy's analysis has been highly influential. Nevertheless, there are particular aspects of his argument that are flawed. In particular, Gilroy mistakenly assumes that the basis of 'white' working class racism lay in the economic benefits they accrued. To develop this point further and in the absence of research carried out in Britain, the results of American research are drawn upon (Reich 1971; Perlo 1975; Symanski 1976). Whilst caution should be exercised about transposing the results of studies from one country to another, the findings are highly illuminating, and, at the very least, shed doubt on the validity of the thesis that 'white' workers economically benefit from racism.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the American research evidence (Reich 1971; Perlo 1975; Symanski 1976). First, 'white' workers, regardless of their own attitudes and actions, did not accrue economic benefits from racist exclusionary practices. Whilst maintaining exclusionary practices through strategies of collusion with employers may have helped to preserve the better jobs for 'white' workers, the wages they accrued from such exclusionary practices were significantly less than what they would have gained if a strategy of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity had been pursued. Second, the impact of such racist exclusionary practices was that they indirectly served the interests of capital by dividing workers on the grounds of racism.

If we accept that 'white' workers do not derive economic benefits from exclusionary practices motivated by racism, the question remains why do they continue to uphold and articulate the ideology of racism and fail to engage in class-based action with 'non-white' workers? Part of the explanation can be gleaned from the analysis advanced by Phizacklea and Miles (1979) who contend that critical to understanding the post-war expression of racism was the coincidental arrival and settlement of migrant labour in Britain from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean in areas of working class residence at a time when these areas were undergoing major economic decline. The continuing ideological hold of a racism that drew its images from the British experiment with slavery and colonialism meant that people from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean were already held in low esteem by much of British society even prior to their arrival. When they arrived and settled in working class areas that were undergoing socio-economic decline, it was little surprise that the 'white' working class came to

regard them as the primary factor in their area's decline and a threat to their economic well-being. As Phizacklea and Miles (1979: 118) make clear, the basis of working class racism lay in their

...attempt to understand and explain *immediate daily experience*, while the real reasons for both the socio-economic and New Commonwealth immigration are to be found in much more abstract and long-standing social and economic processes which cannot be grasped in terms of daily experience.

This explanation advanced by Phizacklea and Miles (1979) and subsequently developed by Miles (1989) is highly significant in challenging both the weberian and black radical perspective claim that the expression of working class racism lay in the economic benefits they stood to accrue. Instead, for Miles (1989: 55) the expression of working class racism is 'more accurately understood as a response to *inter alia* powerlessness rather than the possession of power'. This explanation also avoids the danger that the more orthodox and cruder Marxist explanations fall into (see for example Cox 1970; Alexander 1987), which is to explain working class racism as the outcome of a capitalist indoctrination process and/or the result of working class false consciousness, that is, the failure of the working class to realise their 'true' or 'real' interests.

Whilst the explanation advanced by Phizacklea and Miles (1979) is highly significant in understanding the social basis of working class racism, it does not constitute the total explanation. The articulation of racism not only involves the negative signification of

the 'them' but also the positive signification of the 'us'. Hence, through the process of (re-)constructing negative beliefs about migrant labour from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean, the working class were simultaneously engaged in positively constructing who they were.

Gilroy's (1982: 278) contention that the racist legacy of slavery and colonialism continues to profoundly structure working class consciousness so that they align themselves to the 'British Nation' and the 'Island Race' is pertinent here. However, it is the American writer, W.E.B. Du Bois (1969) who offers the most compelling analysis of how the working class re-construct themselves. Despite sharing a near identical economic position, 'white' workers did not engage in united action with 'black' workers because they identified themselves as members of an imagined community (Anderson 1983) - the 'white race'. Whilst constructing oneself as 'white' did not confer any economic benefits, the 'white' working class did receive what Du Bois (1969) refers to as a 'public and psychological wage' for having the same skin colour as members of the capitalist ruling class. In the case of England, these 'wages of whiteness' not only enabled the 'white' working class to psychologically appropriate and thereby share in the glory and successes of colonialism and empire but it also ensured their lives were free from racist violence and daily vilification, humiliation and de-humanisation in society - the average lot of the 'non-white'. The construction of such 'race feeling' and the psychological benefits conferred by 'whiteness' meant that 'white' workers forgot their identical economic interests with 'black' workers and accepted stunted lives for themselves and those more oppressed than themselves.

I now turn to consider another aspect of Gilroy's argument: his forceful rejection of the possibility that the 'white' working class will *ever* challenge racism (Gilroy 1982: 1987). It should be acknowledged that in his earlier writings (see for example, Gilroy 1982: 279-280), Gilroy did allow for the possibility that 'white' working class youth may overcome their allegiance to 'race' and nation and challenge racism. In particular, 'black'-white resistance against state harassment; the Rock Against Racism (RAR) initiative which mobilised large numbers of 'white' working class youth and later the 'inter-racial' nature of the urban unrest during the early 1980s (see also Gilroy 1987: chapter 1), lead Gilroy (1982: 279) to conclude that 'the politics of working-class youth cultures offers the possibility that 'race', as a source of segmentation, may recede'. Overall, however, his work (see Gilroy 1982; 1987; 1993) is characterised by a deep pessimism towards attempts to construct an 'inter-racial' class solidarity.

Gilroy's mistake is to generalise about the futility of 'inter-racial' class action from a highly specific period in history, namely between 1948 and 1983 (see Gilroy 1982; 1987). This snapshot of the working class, in the hands of Gilroy, becomes a permanent representation of the political and ideological outlook of the 'white' working class both before and after this period leading him to conclude that they are unlikely to reach beyond a 'reformist will'. On the other hand, if he had overcome his dogged attachment to the radical 'race relations' approach (see Miles 1984) and employed a historical analysis he would have uncovered numerous periods which witnessed 'inter-racial' class action against racism (see Fryer 1984; Ramdin 1987). It is beyond the realms of this

study to document the history of ‘white’ working class resistance to racism but a few examples should suffice to demonstrate that to portray only the racism of the ‘white’ working class is to show a highly one-sided story; instead, these instances of anti-racist action emphasise that a more accurate conclusion would be that, as well as re-producing the racism that prevailed within particular historical conjunctures, the ‘white’ English working class also, on occasions, sought to actively challenge it (Fryer 1984; Piratin 1978; Beckman 1993).

Fryer (1984) demonstrates how during the height of British involvement in the slave trade in the late eighteenth century, elements of the embryonic working class organised vigorous campaigns to abolish slavery. This was even reflected in areas that owed their prosperity to the slave trade: the cotton capital of Manchester saw mass working class support for abolition including the 1792 petition which carried over 20,000 signatures from a total population of under 75,000 (Fryer 1984: 210). As Fryer remarks (1984: 210) ‘The unity in struggle of black and white working people found practical expression on the streets of British provincial centres in the 1790s’. Such solidarity did not merely extend to ‘non-white’ populations abroad but was also reflected in the relationship to the small ‘black’ population in England. Two of the leaders of the anti-slavery working class movement were of African descent: William Davidson and Robert Wedderburn (Fryer 1984: 214-227).

‘Inter-racial’ class solidarity was also evident during the first half of the nineteenth century in the Chartists - the first and only mass revolutionary working class movement

in Britain - with William Cuffay, a tailor of African origin becoming one of its leaders in London (Fryer 1984: 239-244). Critically, such a current of working class resistance to racism did not end with the Chartists as a leading black radical writer claims (see Robinson 1983) but continued as evidenced by the resistance offered by English and Jewish workers to the anti-semitic British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the 1930s and 1950s (see Piratin 1978; Beckman 1993).

Even during the post-war era that is the subject of Gilroy's critique, there is evidence to suggest that 'white' labour and 'their' institutions challenged racism (Miles and Phizacklea 1977b; Miles and Phizacklea 1978). Similarly, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) established in 1977 to counter the electoral rise of the far-right National Front through extra-parliamentary action (Husbands 1983; Messina 1989), received strong support from the labour movement with several major trade unions affiliating and supporting its activities (see for example CPSA 1980: 13; 1981: 11; NALGO 1981: 15; SCPS 1983: 26; 1984: 54). However, Gilroy (1987: 131-135) devotes only four pages to evaluating the politics of this predominantly 'white' mass anti-racist organisation and fails to identify the nature and extent of trade union involvement within the organisation.

An important question arising from the preceding discussion is why is Gilroy so forthright in his rejection of the possibility of 'inter-racial' class action to combat racism? A likely explanation relates to the conceptual framework he employs to develop his argument about racism and anti-racism in Britain. By focusing primarily on the struggles of 'black' youth against the state, Gilroy pays inadequate attention to the

struggles of ‘black’ workers in the workplace (Miles 1984). According to Miles (1984: 223), the danger with this approach is that it effectively ends up ignoring the majority of those ‘black’ workers who have maintained a position in the process of production and fails to consider what effect this position has on political consciousness and practice. For example, no significance is attached in Gilroy’s framework to shared concerns over ‘bread and butter’ issues such as the pursuit of higher wages and improved working conditions which open up the possibility of ‘inter-racial’ class action at work (including over racism). The implications of Miles’ critique are clear: if Gilroy had altered his gaze to consider the position of ‘black’ workers at work, he perhaps would have drawn a rather different conclusion about ‘inter-racial’ class action than he does. As Miles (1984: 226) goes on to conclude in a highly significant passage:

By taking full account of the significance of production relations, one can explain not only why the ‘black’ petite-bourgeoisie is prepared to act as an agent of social control over the ‘black’ revolt, but also why sections of the ‘black’ working class are prepared to engage in common struggle with other fractions of the working class for, for example, a living wage for workers in the National Health Service.

In the light of this criticism levelled at Gilroy by Miles, it seems appropriate to critically assess what Miles along with Annie Phizacklea (see Phizacklea and Miles 1980) consider to be a more suitable framework in which to ground an analysis of racism and anti-racism in Britain.

The neo-Marxist perspective: Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea

The work of Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea represents the most sustained attempt to analyse and understand racialised social relations in Britain from a neo-Marxist perspective (see Miles and Phizacklea 1979; Phizacklea and Miles 1979; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982; Miles and Phizacklea 1984; Miles 1984; Miles 1989; Miles 1993). Unlike the two preceding perspectives, Miles and Phizacklea forcefully argue that the object of the analysis should be racism and not 'race' per se (Miles 1982; Miles 1984 and Phizacklea 1984). For them, the idea of 'race' refers to a social and historical construction, an ideology which serves to mask real socio-economic relationships based on class relations (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982; 1989).

Phizacklea and Miles (1980: 5) go on to ground their analysis of racist and anti-racist action in capitalist social relations where:

...classes are structurally determined in relation to the productive forces and...the capitalist mode of production produces and reproduces two 'unambiguous' classes, the bourgeoisie and the working class, and certain contradictory locations between these two classes.

Due to divisions born out of the changing nature of work within capitalism which result in the constant transformation of industry and the working class within it, Phizacklea and Miles (1980: 6-7) go on to contend that the working class (and other social classes)

do not exist as homogenous and unitary entities within the capitalist social formation. Instead, some forms of wage labour such as skilled manual work tend to occupy a relatively advantageous position within the working class compared to unskilled workers with corresponding politico-ideological effects such as a craft ideology (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 6). In order to accommodate such heterogeneity in intra-class relations and building on the work of Poulantzas (1973; 1978), Phizacklea and Miles (1980: 6-7; 24-25n) employ the concept of class fraction to refer:

...to an objective position within a class boundary which is, in turn, determined by both economic and politico-ideological relations...class boundaries mark the objectively different structural positions in economic, political and ideological relations, but these relations also have independent effects within these boundaries (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 6).

Within this context, Phizacklea and Miles (1980) begin their discussion of migrant labour in Britain. They demonstrate that the origins of migration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean to Britain lay in the demands of an expansionary capitalist formation. In this sense, it had many parallels with labour from the southern European countries who were recruited to work in the western European economies during the same period (Castles and Kosack 1985). Once in Britain, they found themselves subject to a process of racialisation where

...social relations between people...[were] structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities (Miles 1989: 75).

With regard to the British labour market, this racialisation process contributed to migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean being subjected to exclusionary practices that prevented them from acquiring skilled manual and non-manual jobs. Although racism was a key factor motivating the instigation of such exclusionary practices, Miles is careful to stress that such exclusionary practices were also motivated by the fact that migrants 'had few skills relevant to an industrial capitalist economy' (Miles 1989; 126).

The outcome was that migrant labour from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean came to occupy a highly distinctive position in economic relations 'concentrated within the manual working class and, compared with all workers, concentrated within the semi- and unskilled sections of the working class' (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 18). Additionally, they were disproportionately concentrated in certain types of manual work characterised by a shortage of labour; shift working; unsocial hours; low pay and an unpleasant working environment. This position in economic relations was reproduced through the existence of 'racial' discrimination which denied 'non-white' labour the opportunity for upward social mobility (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 19-20) so that they came to:

...occupy a structurally distinct position in the economic, political and ideological relations of British capitalism, but within the boundary of the working class. They therefore constitute a fraction of the working class, one that can be identified as a racialised fraction (Miles 1982: 165).

In his later work (Miles 1987b; 1989: 121-129), Miles no longer employs the concept of class fraction although he continues to maintain that migrant labour and their British born children occupy a structurally distinctive position in class relations. Whilst he offers no explanation for this 'shift' in position, it is not difficult to establish that he has been forced to re-consider the theoretical assumptions of his earlier analysis in the light of an historical analysis which looks at the complex re-composition of 'non-white' social groups over the last two decades of economic and political re-structuring. Since the early 1980s, survey evidence has consistently demonstrated that significant proportions of migrant labourers and their British-born children have extricated themselves out of semi-and unskilled work and into skilled manual and junior non-manual work (and increasingly the petty-bourgeoisie)(Brown 1984; Beishon et al 1995; Iganski and Payne 1996; Modood 1997a).

The roots of this development lay in the complex and often contradictory articulation of class processes, racism(s) and exclusionary practices, residential and industrial location, anti-racist action and its impact on the state, and the characteristics of the 'non-white' communities themselves. It is this complex articulation which also helps us to understand why this process of heterogeneity has taken place at a different pace

for difference ‘non-white’ groups (Virdee 1999). The outcome of such a reconfiguration is that it is no longer appropriate to employ the concept of class fraction to describe the position of ‘no-white’ social groups in class relations. Instead, these groups are increasingly integral members of the old and new working class and the petty bourgeoisie.

Combatting racism through ‘ethnic’ and class formation

A particularly important strength of Phizacklea and Miles’ theoretical argument (1980) is that whilst they clearly acknowledge the significance of racism in dividing the working class and placing ‘non-white’ workers in an inferior position in class relations compared to ‘white’ workers, they also retain the possibility that ‘white’ workers and ‘non-white’ workers may engage in ‘inter-racial’ class action (including over racism) as a result of their common position as wage labourers in a capitalist social formation. This insight is highly significant because it creates the theoretical space to accommodate the anti-racist action of ‘white’ workers which, as we have already seen, has taken place at regular intervals over the past two centuries.

Phizacklea and Miles (1980: 28-31) (see also Miles and Phizacklea 1977a) go on to claim that ‘non-white’ social groups have three possible strategies available to them to combat racism: ‘ethnic formation’, ‘black’ unity or ‘racial formation’ around the identity ‘black’ and class formation. An ‘ethnic formation’ strategy is defined as one where:

...migrant workers pursue political interests on an ethnic basis:...[where] a group believes that a specified political goal can best be attained by organising with other individuals who are defined as belonging to the same group (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 30)

A 'black' unity or 'racial formation' strategy signified those instances where:

...black workers conceive of themselves as having sufficient interests in common to justify organisation over and above the ethnic boundaries that otherwise divide them. This would entail joint recognition of their position as a racialised fraction of the working class. (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 31).

Finally, a class formation approach saw 'non-white' labour as

...structurally, part of the working class, from which it is concluded that the specific interests of black workers will be articulated and advanced through working-class political institutions (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 28).

After a brief review of the empirical research regarding anti-racist action in the 1960s and 1970s, Phizacklea and Miles (1980: 34-36) concluded there was evidence of both class and 'ethnic formation' with the latter most in evidence. According to Phizacklea and Miles (1980), the racism of the 'white' working class and their institutions had

contributed to 'ethnic organisation [being]...forced upon black workers as the only means of attaining their ends' (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 35):

...while there is clear evidence to show that racial exclusion does not operate in all situations, the persistence of racist belief and practice amongst the 'white' working class and its institutions and its legitimation by government policy and practice, fascist political parties and prominent politicians, produces situations where black people must organise along ethnic lines to improve and defend their position in the British social formation (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 36).

They go on to claim that they found no evidence of a black unity strategy because:

...despite their common position as a racially excluded class fraction, migrant workers from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent are unlikely to organise together on any significant scale in the immediate future...[because of] the cultural distinctiveness both within and between these two groups of migrants and the mutual suspicion and hostility that seems to exist between them (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 34).

These broad conclusions were re-affirmed in an important study carried out by Phizacklea and Miles in north-west London in the mid-1970s². Although no mention is

² See chapter 4 and methodological appendix in Phizacklea and Miles 1980 for details of fieldwork.

made of 'inter-racial' class action to combat racism itself, a class unity approach to political action was discerned arising out of a common concerns over wages, prices and inflation and 'black' workers' involvement in trade union struggles against state-imposed wage controls (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 229). For Phizacklea and Miles (1980: 229)

...the significance of such struggles lies in the fact that they bring together fractions of the working class in common political action, an important precondition for the development of a consciousness of a common class position which transcends awareness of the different interests which arise out of and express fractionalisation (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 229).

However, they forcefully assert that there remained two important barriers to the strengthening of a political practice based on class solidarity. First, the migrant status of their sample of 'Caribbean' respondents meant they had different patterns of political socialisation to 'white' workers and retained a desire to return to their country of origin to join the petty-bourgeoisie (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 223, 227) leading Phizacklea and Miles (1980) to claim that some did not see themselves as part of the English working class and the struggles being waged against capitalist exploitation. A second factor hindering the development of an 'inter-racial' class solidarity was the racism of the working class and their institutions.

Whilst recognising that it was working class racism that had led 'black' workers to establish self-organised groups, Phizacklea and Miles (1980) go on to conclude that 'ethnic' organisation posed dangers to the formation of a radical class consciousness and a class unity approach:

...the facts of black political organisation (albeit defensive in character) and a limited racial consciousness amongst at least a minority of the black working class pose a challenge both to black workers as a fraction of the working class and to the working class as a whole. That challenge will become ever more serious as the economic and political crisis deepens (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 231).

Hence, they prescribed that

Unless the political expression of racism within the working class is decisively curbed, the fragmentation of the class will be even further advanced if it does result in a heightening of racial consciousness, while to curb it is one phase in the development of a radical class consciousness (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 231).

Although, Phizacklea and Miles' (1980) study did not involve interviews with 'South Asian' workers, they still felt confident enough to rule out the possibility that 'Caribbean' and 'South Asian' workers would join together to combat racism. Due to

the ‘cultural distinctiveness both within and between these two groups of migrants and the mutual hostility that seems to exist between them’ (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 34).

‘South Asian’ workers

...will not inevitably come to organise in common with West Indian workers against racism and discrimination...We are therefore referring not to a potential but to a real source of fragmentation within black migrant labour as a working class fraction... (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 231).

A critique of the neo-Marxist perspective

Whilst this theoretical framework has considerable strengths, it suffers from one important limitation arising from the disagreement between Phizacklea and Miles (1980) and Gilroy (1982; 1987) over the form and nature of anti-racist action in the 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, Phizacklea and Miles (1980) contend that anti-racist action took the form of ‘ethnic formation’ with no evidence of ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ uniting to combat racism whilst on the other hand, Gilroy (1987) contends anti-racist action during this period witnessed the emergence of a process of ‘racial formation’ whereby ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ united around a ‘black’ identity.

By reviewing the nature of anti-racist action in the 1960s and 1970s, it would appear that the strategy of ‘black’ unity was most in evidence (Moore 1975; Sivanandan 1982; Shukra 1996). Evidence of the ‘black’ unity approach is not difficult to find. From the

mid-1960s, a plethora of organisations were established committed to challenging the racism faced by ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ alike (Sivanandan 1982). The first of these was the Racial Action Adjustment Society (RAAS)³. Drawing inspiration from Malcolm X’s revolutionary black nationalist politics (see Malcolm X 1970; Malcolm X 1994), their organising slogan was ‘Black men, unite, ...we have nothing to lose but our fears’ (cited in Sivanandan 1982: 16). Whilst initially comprised of ‘Caribbeans’, it lent its support to both ‘South Asian’ and ‘Caribbean’ struggles against racism wherever it was requested. When one of the first strikes against racism and exclusionary practices began in May 1965 at Courtauld’s Red Scar Mills, the predominantly ‘South Asian’ workforce requested the support of RAAS (see Sivanandan 1982 and Foot 1965). Sivanandan (1982: 16), a strong advocate of this type of anti-racist action concluded that such solidarity ‘marked a progression in the *organic* unity of the (Afro-) Asian, ‘coolie’, and (Afro-) Caribbean, slave’. Such ‘Caribbean’ and ‘South Asian’ ‘black’ solidarity was cemented organisationally when ‘South Asians’ like Abdulla Patel, a striker at Courtaulds Red Scar Mill, joined RAAS, so that it became a ‘South Asian’ and ‘Caribbean’ ‘black’ organisation (Sivanandan 1982: 20).

Following quickly in the wake of RAAS was another organisation called the Black People’s Alliance (BPA) comprising both ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ and established in the immediate aftermath of the racist speeches made by Enoch Powell in 1968. Sivanandan (1982: 25) describes this organisation as a ‘militant front for Black Consciousness and against racialism’. The founder and general secretary of this

³ RAAS is a Jamaican swear-word.

organisation was a 'South Asian', Jagmohan Joshi, who was also leader of the Indian Workers Association (IWA-GB) in the West Midlands (Josephides 1990: 119). Other organisations comprising 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' members which organised resistance to racism and exclusionary practices around a political identity of 'black' included the Universal Coloured People's Association (UCPA); the Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP) (see Sivanandan 1982: 63) and the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) which brought together 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' women to develop a feminist strategy against racism and sexism (Parmar 1990; Shukra 1996: 28-29).

It was not just through the formation of joint 'South Asian'/ 'Caribbean' anti-racist organisations that a 'black' solidarity was forged. This period also witnessed a plethora of newspapers and journals spring up that expressed support for each social group and their struggles against racism. Some of the better known journals of the time included Black Liberator (e.g. 1975/76), Race Today (e.g. 1969) and Bradford Black (e.g. 1977). However, it is the discourse employed by anti-racist activists, especially the use of the term 'black' to encompass people of South Asian and Caribbean descent that makes equivocation impossible regarding whether 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' activists believed 'black' solidarity was the most appropriate way to combat racism, and, ultimately, achieve an 'inter-racial' class unity with 'white' workers. Avtar Joughl, a 'South Asian' and general secretary of the Indian Workers Association (GB) in the West Midlands defined the anti-racist struggle in the following terms in 1970:

We feel unity will develop in struggle. This does not in any sense deny the need for black workers to have their own caucuses in every factory and place of work. We do not advocate separate black unions; that would be to play the capitalists game of dividing the working class (Report of the General Secretary, IWA (GB) Avtar Jouhl 1970 cited in Josephides 1990: 119).

The prevalence of such joint ‘South Asian’/‘Caribbean’ solidarity constructed around a ‘black’ identity brings into question Phizacklea and Miles’ (1980: 34) assertion that there was no evidence of ‘black’ unity to combat racism. Further, if anti-racist action did not extend beyond the parameters of a local area as many spontaneous actions did not (see for example Southall Monitoring Group 1981; Newham Monitoring Project 1991), it may have appeared to the outside observer that the protest was of an ‘ethnic formation’ type for reasons to do with the ‘cultural distinctiveness’ and ‘mutual suspicion and hostility’ (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 34) that allegedly existed between ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’, when, in actual fact, it may simply have been that ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ resided in different areas (Smith 1977) and were therefore not in a position to organise joint resistance against racism locally.

Of course, this does not mean that an ‘ethnic formation’ strategy was *never* employed to combat racism and exclusionary practices (see Brooks 1975; Beetham 1970) which is the implication of Gilroy’s critique (see Gilroy 1982; Gilroy 1987; see also Sivanandan 1982 who reaches a similar conclusion). In particular, when the basis of racism and exclusionary practices became not the negative signification of skin colour but a

religious or cultural characteristic, the particular group affected would organise on an 'ethnic' basis and other 'non-white' groups unaffected by this form of racism tended not to take part in the protest. Examples of such 'ethnic formation' in the 1960s and 1970s would include Sikh demands to wear a turban whilst working on the buses and driving motorbikes; Muslim demands for single-sex schools and 'Caribbean' attempts to resist the labelling of their children as educationally sub-normal (ESN) (Phizacklea and Miles 1980: 36; Beetham 1970).

Until the mid-1970s, there appears to have been little evidence of 'inter-racial' class action to combat racism (Phizacklea and Miles 1980). However, under pressure from the triple forces of 'black' worker resistance; growing union rank and file pressure and concern about the threat posed by the National Front - a fascist organisation - the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Labour Party began to take measures to combat racism (Miles and Phizacklea 1978; Wrench 1987).

Overall, it would appear that all three forms of anti-racist action were in evidence during the 1960s and 1970s, with a 'South Asian'/'Caribbean' alliance constructed around the identity 'black' arguably the most prevalent (Sivanandan 1982; Gilroy 1987; Gilroy 1993; Shukra 1996). It is worth noting however, that this on-going debate about the precise form that anti-racist action took in the 1960s and 1970s (see Modood 1988; 1994) would benefit greatly from detailed empirical research which considered the politics and ideology of some of the organisations discussed in this chapter.

Conclusions

This chapter considered how three theoretical perspectives - weberian, black radical and neo-Marxist - attempt to address the relationship between racism, working class agency and anti-racist action. It was established that all three perspectives acknowledge the adverse impact racism has had on the Marxian notion of working class agency. For the weberians Rex and Tomlinson (1979) and the black radical Gilroy (1982; 1987), the origins of such racism lay in the economic and ideological benefits they accrued. Significantly, for both perspectives, the English working class had permanently fractured along a 'racial' fault-line thereby eliminating any prospects of 'inter-racial' class action. In the absence of 'white' working class support, Rex and Tomlinson's (1979) weberian model predicted that anti-racist action would take the form of 'ethnic formation' with 'South Asians' and 'Caribbeans' engaged in separate but simultaneous struggles. However, this conclusion was rejected by Gilroy (1987) who asserted that the British social formation was characterised by a form of anti-racist action built around a process of 'racial formation' where 'non-white' social groups had appropriated the imposed 'racial' identity of 'black'. Importantly, this 'racial formation' project was alleged to encompass not only different 'non-white' social groups (e.g. 'South Asians' and 'Caribbeans') but also members of these groups from different social classes.

These conclusions have been challenged by neo-Marxist work from America (Du Bois 1969; Reich 1971; Perlo 1975; Symanski 1976) and Britain (Phizacklea and Miles

1979). American Marxists like Reich (1971), Perlo (1975) and Symanski (1976) contend that 'white' workers, irrespective of their own attitudes, perceptions and actions did not accrue economic benefits from racism. Instead, the expression of racism by 'white' workers represented a particular response to their sense of powerlessness to alter the declining socio-economic circumstances they found themselves in as a result of the re-structuring of the British social formation. Despite sharing a near identical economic position, 'white' workers refused to engage in united action with 'black' workers because they identified themselves as members of an imagined community (Anderson 1983) - the 'white race'. Whilst this process of social re-construction did not confer any economic benefits, the 'white' working class did receive what Du Bois (1969) refers to as a 'public and psychological wage' for being the same colour as members of the capitalist ruling class which made them forget their identical economic interests with 'black' workers and accept stunted lives for themselves and those who were subject to the processes of racialisation and racism.

Gilroy (1987) and Rex and Tomlinson's (1979) assertion that the working class was permanently fractured along a 'racial' fault-line is also disputed. Whilst Gilroy (1987) draws this conclusion on the basis of an inaccurate conceptualisation of the working class, an over-concentration on anti-racist struggles outside of work, and by ignoring entirely the mounting evidence of 'inter-racial' class action over the past two centuries in Britain (Piratin 1978; Fryer 1984; Beckman 1993), Rex and Tomlinson (1979) rule out any consideration of 'inter-racial' class action by virtue of the restrictive framework

they adopt which conceives of ‘non-white’ social groups and ‘white’ workers as comprising discrete ‘racial’ classes.

Only the neo-Marxist argument of Phizacklea and Miles (1980) (see also Miles 1982; 1987; 1993) leaves open the possibility that ‘white’ workers may combat racism alongside ‘non-white’ workers. Whilst clearly acknowledging the impact of racism in dividing the working class and placing ‘non-white’ social groups in a markedly inferior position in class relations compared to ‘white’ workers, they contend that their continuing joint location within the boundaries of the working class, opens up the possibility that ‘white’ workers may engage in ‘inter-racial’ class action, including over racism. Arising from this analysis, Phizacklea and Miles (1980) identify three strategies that ‘non-white’ social groups have available to them to combat racism: class formation; ‘ethnic formation’ and ‘racial formation’ around the identity ‘black’.

Whilst the theoretical perspective advanced by Phizacklea and Miles (1980) has considerable strengths, they were mistaken in the claim there was no evidence of ‘racial formation’ around a ‘black’ identity. Instead, the evidence suggests that all three forms of anti-racist action were present, with Gilroy (1987) correctly identifying the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project as being most in evidence.

In the next chapter, I consider the precise economic, political and ideological circumstances under which this ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project flourished and discuss whether it can be accommodated within a Marxist theory of racism and anti-racism.

3 The rise and decline of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project

Introduction

The preceding chapter highlighted how Gilroy (1987) accurately identified the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project as the dominant form of anti-racist action in the 1960s and 1970s. It was also noted however, that in the hands of Gilroy (1987), this project was envisaged as marking the negation of the class struggle between capital and labour, leading him to eventually re-conceptualise such action as constituting a new social movement. Clearly, then for Gilroy (1987) such anti-racist action was seen to be incompatible with a Marxist theory of racism and anti-racism. No doubt such a conclusion was reinforced by the refusal of neo-Marxists Phizacklea and Miles (1980) to at first, concede the existence of such action and, then argue that it marked a shift away from class-based politics (Miles 1984)¹, thereby denying:

The possibility that either the political and cultural life of ‘races’ or their experiences of racial subordination can become unifying factors enabling groups to act across the formal lines of class... (Gilroy 1987: 27).

¹ It is worth noting that Miles does concede the existence of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in his later work (see for example Miles 1987a; 1993).

Whilst Gilroy (1987) accurately identified the genesis of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in Britain and its two key components - a ‘South Asian’/‘Caribbean’ alliance and cross-class collaboration - he failed to fully map the precise economic, political and ideological circumstances under which such action arose. Failing to ground such anti-racist action within the wider social relations that prevailed meant that when the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project declined in significance during the 1980s and 1990s (Modood 1994), Gilroy (1993) found himself so intellectually disorientated that he ended up negatively dismissing contemporary anti-racist action as a ‘narcissistic celebration’ (Gilroy 1990a: 210) that marked a ‘general retreat into the dubious comfort of ethnic particularity’ (Gilroy 1993: 31). Through a detailed consideration of the precise economic, political and ideological conditions amidst which a ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project flourished and subsequently declined between the 1960s and 1990s, I demonstrate that Gilroy was rather hasty in his judgement that such anti-racist action could not be theorised and accommodated within a neo-Marxist framework.

The rise of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in the 1960s and 1970s

The proletarianisation of a significant proportion of migrant labour from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean was a highly significant economic development that contributed to the forging of a ‘South Asian’/ ‘Caribbean’ alliance to combat racism. Despite the heterogenous class status of the migrating populations, amongst whom were included elements of the petty-bourgeoisie, rural peasantry, working class and

professional workers (see Daniel 1968; Heath and Ridge 1983), a large proportion of migrants found themselves working in unskilled and semi-skilled manual work undertaking jobs recently vacated by 'white' workers (Miles 1982; Miles 1989). The racialisation of the British labour market and the exclusionary practices that followed (not always motivated by racism), coupled with the fact that 'racial' discrimination in employment was legal until 1968 (Solomos 1993) ensured that migrant labour were unable to secure any significant degree of upward social mobility (Miles 1982; Miles 1989). As a result, they came to constitute a racialised class fraction - a concept that usefully denoted that whilst they remained an element of the British working class, they also occupied a distinctive position within that class.

For the purposes of explaining the origins of anti-racist action constructed around a 'black' identity, what was especially significant about this racism was that for almost three decades following the arrival of migrant labour to Britain from the former colonies, it failed to distinguish to any marked extent between those people from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean nor the class differences that existed between and within each of these groups. The two national studies which carried out discrimination testing during this period (Daniel 1968; Smith 1977) found that the primary component of racism was 'colour prejudice' (Daniel 1968: 209; Smith 1977: 111) - with both 'South Asians' and 'Caribbeans' subjected to racist exclusionary practices because they were not 'white'. As Smith (1977: 111) observed:

...there is no significant difference in the level of discrimination between West Indians, Indians and Pakistanis, though we have already seen that discrimination against Greeks is markedly lower. This suggests that discrimination is based on a general colour prejudice, which does not distinguish between people belonging to different racial groups, having different religions, speaking different languages and coming from different countries. They are all lumped together as 'coloured people'.

By contending that both 'Caribbeans' and 'South Asians' were racialised and subjected to exclusionary practices primarily because they were not 'white', my intention is not to deny the existence of differential 'racial' stereotypes of 'Caribbeans' and 'South Asians' during this period (see Duffield 1988 for an excellent discussion of 'cultural' racism). However, the negative signification of alleged cultural differences remained a secondary element in the racism deployed against migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean during the 1960s and 1970s (Smith 1977; Barker 1981).

It was against this background where racism and exclusionary practices had proletarianised and thereby homogenised a large proportion of migrant labour on the grounds of a negative signification of a 'non-white' skin colour that the first stirrings of collective resistance against racism emerged in the mid-1960s (Sivanandan 1982). Recognising that the central component of the racism that 'non-white' social groups were subject to was motivated by the fact that they were not 'white', coupled with the inspirational struggle being waged by American 'blacks' against racism and the visits

to Britain in December 1964 and January 1965 respectively of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X (Sivanandan 1982; Malcolm X 1994), led 'black' activists to conclude that racism would be more effectively combatted through united action between the 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' communities. Shukra (1996: 30-31) describes how these activists set about attempting to build this alliance:

The 'black' radical activist was usually an unpaid campaigner who operated intensively with a small group of like-minded people, went from meeting to meeting, distributed pamphlets, spoke at rallies, carried banners and organised demonstrations to convince what was termed 'West Indian', 'Indian' and 'Pakistani' people that their experience of inferior treatment at the hands of employers, schools, local authorities, government officials, politicians and the police was unacceptable. Crucially, they also argued that this situation could be changed through militant political activity, primarily against employers and the state...the black activists used the term 'black' to build a movement to mobilize and cohere self-reliant communities of resistance to racism...

Out of the joint anti-racist struggles that followed, the imposed 'racial' identity of 'black' was appropriated and infused with new meaning forging 'black' 'communities of resistance' (Sivanandan 1982). Hence, anti-racist action constructed around the identity 'black' and involving joint 'Caribbean' and 'South Asian' resistance was the product of a unique set of economic, political and ideological conditions that shaped the British social formation during the 1960s and 1970s.

Similarly, the cross-class nature of ‘black’ resistance can only be fully understood by not divorcing as Gilroy does (1987), but critically integrating the concept of ‘racial formation’ into a historical materialist analysis of racism and anti-racism. Before I do so however, I want to return briefly to Gilroy’s problematic use of Marxian concepts neatly illustrated in the following quote on the nature of cross-class ‘black’ resistance:

...the formal lines of class have been blurred recently not just by the explicitly anti-racist actions of the black petty-bourgeoisie...but by the struggles of black teachers, business people and even media workers (Gilroy (1987: 24).

Here, Gilroy fails to define what precise class position teachers, media workers and business people actually occupy; they are neither working class nor part of the petty-bourgeoisie nor members of a ‘new class’. I have already demonstrated in Chapter 2, how his problematic definition of the working class as comprising skilled manual workers (see Gilroy 1987: 18) resulted in his analysis of racism and anti-racism not considering developments that related to an ever-increasing proportion of the proletariat in late capitalism that worked in low grade non-manual occupations (Braverman 1974; Crompton and Jones 1984). Based on such evidence (see also Draper 1978: 624-627; Wood 1986) it could equally be contended that most teachers and media workers constitute two further elements that make up the non-industrial proletariat in contemporary capitalism. Relatedly, the petty-bourgeoisie (including business people) should be narrowly defined as constituting those

...who make their living primarily by the exercise of their own labo[u]r with their self-owned means of production (tools) or other property (like a shop). They are, typically, self-employed small producers or tradespeople...in short, largely self-employed artisans and shopkeepers (Draper 1978: 288).

Consequently, the evidence for Gilroy's contention of the process of 'racial formation' across class boundaries should accurately reside solely on the claim that the petty-bourgeoisie (including business people) supported the working class in combating racism and exclusionary practices (Sivanandan 1982). The economic, political and ideological conditions under which they did can now be considered.

It has already been established that migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean displayed a highly heterogeneous class structure (Daniel 1968; Heath and Ridge 1983). Whilst the majority were proletarianised due to the impact of exclusionary practices motivated in large part by a racism whose chief component was the negative signification of a 'non-white' skin colour (Smith 1977), research also suggests that a small proportion of migrant labour went into self-employment, largely in an attempt to escape poor employment prospects and racism in the wider labour market (Aldrich et al 1981: 175). By the mid-1970s, this petty-bourgeois layer comprised about eight per cent of 'South Asian' men and six per cent of 'Caribbean' men and seven per cent of 'South Asian' women and just one per cent of 'Caribbean' women (Smith 1977: 92).

Whilst this petty-bourgeois element formally occupied a different class position to that of the racialised fraction of the working class, their socio-economic circumstances were virtually indistinguishable (Aldrich et al 1981; McEvoy et al 1982) with the businesses owned by the racialised petty-bourgeoisie characterised by persistently low turnover achieved at the cost of working extremely long and unsocial hours (McEvoy et al 1982: 9). In one of the first studies ever undertaken of the 'South Asian' petty bourgeoisie in England, McEvoy et al (1982: 10) concluded that 'Asian entrepreneurs are entering not an upward ladder leading to material enrichment, but a dead-end on the fringe of the modern economy'. Coupled with their poor economic position, this social layer continued to find themselves subject to the processes of racialisation and racism (see Aldrich et al 1981; McEvoy et al 1982) so that they came to be described as a racialised class fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie (Small 1994).

Finding themselves economically and politically marginalised and therefore unable to realise their distinctive class interests due to the impact of racism and exclusionary practices, it was unsurprising to find that parts of the racialised class fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie supported the struggles of 'black' labour in combating racism and exclusionary practices in the 1960s and 1970s (see Sivanandan 1982). It was the coincidence of a common socio-political position during a highly specific historical conjuncture where the racialised class fractions of the working class and petty-bourgeoisie were subject to exclusionary practices motivated by a colour racism that failed to distinguish or recognise class differences within and between the 'non-white'

communities that led to the development of a 'black' 'racial formation' project and the 'formal lines of class being blurred'.

This cross-class alliance is not incompatible with Marxist social theory (Draper 1978). Indeed, it could be argued that during the 1960s and 1970s, the racialised petit-bourgeoisie in England played the classic role assigned to it in Marxist social theory as an inherently unstable class within capitalist social formations:

...this Janus-like class 'represent[s] a living duplex, a class amalgam with an internal class struggle of their very own, a social schizoid ("cut up into two pieces") (Draper (1978: 292).

Consequently, in periods of intense class struggle and working class advancement (as in Britain during the late 1960s and early 1970s) it tends to align itself to the working class whereas during periods of low class struggle and working class retreat (as in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s as will be shown next) it tends to align itself with capital.

The decline of the 'black' 'racial formation' project in the 1980s and 1990s

By the mid-1980s, the 'black' 'racial formation' project was coming under strain and accompanying its demise was a polemical exchange between those scholars that strived

to justify its retention (see Solomos and Back 1995; 1996) and those that welcomed the re-configuration of anti-racist politics (Modood 1988; 1994). Tariq Modood's analysis of the changing nature of anti-racist politics in the contemporary social formation (see 1988; 1992; 1994; 1996) had a particularly important impact on such academic debates (see Shukra 1996) as well as on public policy formation (Modood et al 1997). Modood argued that those forms of anti-racist action constructed around a 'black' identity or what he refers to as 'political blackness' during the 1960s and 1970s were harmful to 'South Asians' because they defined the basis of their oppression too narrowly as being solely the result of the negative signification of their skin colour, that is, the fact that they were not 'white'. According to Modood (1994) such a conceptualisation suppressed the racism directed at 'South Asians' arising out of an antipathy to their distinctive cultural beliefs and behaviours:

The emphasis on colour-discrimination and colour-identity denies what otherwise would be obvious: the hostility of the majority is likely to be particularly forceful against non-white individuals who are members of a community...which is sufficiently numerous to reproduce itself as a community and has a distinctive and cohesive value system which can be perceived as an alternative to and a possible challenge to the norm; this phenomenon is currently growing in Britain and disproportionately impacts upon Asians (Modood 1994: 865).

As a result, Modood (1994) goes on to dismiss the process of ‘racial formation’ constructed around a ‘black’ identity as having little resonance or organic basis within the ‘South Asian’ communities. Indeed, he goes so far as to dismiss anti-racist politics constructed around a ‘black’ identity as a ‘meaningless chimera’ (Modood 1988: 399) imposed on ‘South Asian’ communities by left-wing radicals with little understanding of their highly specific oppression and needs: ‘a sense of being black is for most Asians a forced identity, on the periphery of their conception of themselves and not a source of pride or even self-defence’ (Modood 1994: 870).

In contrast, Modood categorises Muslim action over the ‘Satanic Verses’ controversy during the late 1980s and early 1990s as a more ‘authentic’ and thereby more legitimate expression of ‘South Asian’ anti-racism because it ‘attacked the core of one’s very being’ (1994: 869). For Modood (1988: 86):

Authentic anti-racism for Muslims, therefore, will inevitably have a religious dimension and take a form in which it is integrated to the rest of Muslim concerns. Anti-racism begins...by accepting oppressed groups on their own terms (knowing full well that these will change and evolve) not by imposing a spurious identity and asking them to fight in the name of that. The new strength amongst Muslim youths in, for example, not tolerating racial harassment owes no less to Islamic re-assertion than to metropolitan anti-racism: people do not turn and run when something they care about is under attack. The racist taunt ‘Rushdie’ rouses more self-defence than ‘black bastard’! Too many anti-racists

see the racism but are happy to be ignorant of the living identities that racism obscures: South Asians who experience racial discrimination are reduced to discriminated beings ('blacks') who happen to be Asians (Modood 1988: 92).

The major strength of Modood's analysis is the perceptive manner in which he identified the genesis of a particular form of anti-racist action during the late 1980s and 1990s amongst 'non-white' social groups - that of religious formation. However, Modood (1997b: 154-172) is mistaken in claiming that cultural racism was the primary form of racism directed against 'South Asians' during the 1960s and 1970s (Smith 1977). By making such an assertion, he falls into the trap of reification whereby he transposes a form of racism that is more dominant in the late 1980s and 1990s to events during the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, just as a highly specific set of economic, political and ideological factors had helped to shape the process of 'racial formation' around the identity 'black' in the 1960s and 1970s, so it was that an alteration in these factors served to undermine it in the 1980s and 1990s.

The 'black' solidarity that had been forged between 'South Asians' and 'Caribbeans' in the 1960s and 1970s declined amidst the following circumstances. The contraction in particular forms of manufacturing employment in the late 1970s and early 1980s had an adverse impact on a greater proportion of 'non-white' workers, especially people of Pakistani and Caribbean parentage, than 'white' workers (Brown 1984). Accompanying this contraction in manufacturing employment, however, was an expansion in service and state sector employment. Theoretically, there was no

guarantee that migrants would attain jobs in these new expanding sectors of the British economy. During the 1950s and 1960s, 'non-white' workers, despite having formal equal rights as British citizens to compete with indigenous 'white' labour for the growing number of new jobs, continued to find themselves at the bottom of the class structure as a result of the operation of exclusionary practices motivated in large part by racism (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982; Miles 1989).

Hence, a key question that arises when considering the re-structuring of the British social formation since the late 1970s is why did employers and trade unions not coalesce again to exclude 'non-white' workers from the growth in service sector jobs. The answer lies in the fact that the political relations prevalent during this period were radically different to those of the 1950s and 1960s. Of particular importance was the unquestionable presence of an anti-racist movement constructed around a 'black' identity (Sivanandan 1982) and to a lesser extent, class unity (Miles and Phizacklea 1978; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Widgery 1986). In the early 1980s, Britain witnessed major urban unrest in several locations in London (including Brixton and Southall - areas of high 'black' concentration) as well as other major towns and cities (Solomos 1988). Despite the fact that only a minority of the rioters were believed to be 'black' (Gilroy 1987: chapter 1), the anti-racist movement successfully argued that one of the key, if not defining causes of this unrest was racism (Solomos 1993) The distorted media focus also racialised the unrest and ensured that 'race', though not necessarily racism, became central to its understanding (Solomos 1993; Scarman Report 1981).

The outcome was that parts of the local state, especially left-wing Labour-run councils, began to introduce measures to curb the worst excesses of racism and exclusionary practices (Solomos and Ball 1990). One particularly important strategy adopted by the local state was to improve the employment prospects of 'non-white' workers (Ouseley 1990). In the window of opportunity created by anti-racist action based on 'black' solidarity, 'non-white' groups were able to compete for jobs that had previously been closed to them, especially in the service and state sector. The outcome, was that the early 1980s witnessed the beginnings of a period of upward social mobility for 'non-white' groups (Brown 1984; Owen and Green 1992; Jones 1993; Iganski and Payne 1996). However, this upward social mobility took place at a different rate for different 'non-white' groups, with people of Indian and African Asian parentage able to take greater advantage of these opportunities by virtue of their petty-bourgeois migrant class status, their high levels of human capital and their location in the south-east of England whereas people of Pakistani parentage benefitted least from these opportunities because of their rural peasant class status as migrants, their relatively low levels of human capital and their disproportionate location in the north and north-west (Virdee 1999).

The end result of such an amalgam of complex and often contradictory social processes was that it undermined the economic basis of anti-racist action constructed around a 'black' identity. 'Non-white' workers no longer occupied a uniformly disadvantaged position in class relations but were more evenly distributed in both the old and new working classes and increasingly the petty-bourgeoisie. In that instance of successfully forcing the state to introduce reforms to curb racism, 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean'

solidarity as a strategy of resistance was disarmed and its *raison d'être* undermined. Hence, the irony is that in its moment of triumph lay also its demise as the primary form of action adopted by the different 'non-white' groups to combat racism and exclusionary practices.

The state response to provide for the specific needs of each 'ethnic group' replaced the struggle against racism and exclusionary practices leading to a growing ethnicisation of British politics:

The ensuing scramble for government favours and government grants (channelled through local authorities) on the basis of specific ethnic needs and problems served, on the one hand, to deepen ethnic differences and foster ethnic rivalry and, on the other, to widen the definition of ethnicity to include a variety of national and religious groups - Chinese, Cypriots, Greeks, Turks, Irish, Italians, Jews, Moslems, Sikhs - till the term itself became meaningless (except as a means of getting funds) (Sivanandan 1990: 94).

Coupled with such economic and political developments was the growing significance of what some scholars have referred to as the 'new racism' (Barker 1981)². Whilst the negative signification of a 'non-white' skin colour remained a central component of the new racism, alleged cultural differences of different 'non-white' groups compared to

² For a critique of whether the 1980s were witness to the formation of a 'new racism' (see Miles 1993).

‘white’ Britons began to increasingly feature prominently as both negative and positive markers of difference (see for example Barker 1981; Solomos and Back 1995; Cole 1997). In practical terms, this meant that different social groups were racialised differently and this process of racialisation varied according to situation and context. Hence, research undertaken in the 1980s highlighted how ‘South Asians’ were negatively racialised in school as ‘effeminate’ (Mac an Ghail 1988) whilst positively racialised at work as ‘hardworking’ (Jenkins 1986). Similarly, ‘Caribbeans’ were racialised negatively at work as ‘lazy’ (Jenkins 1986) whilst at the same time racialised positively with regard to music and sport (Back 1996; Cohen 1988). As a result, the contemporary social formation has come to be increasingly characterised by the prevalence of ‘multiple racisms’ (Miles 1993) leading some scholars to characterise Britain as ‘multi-racist’ (Cohen 1988).

The consequences of these economic, political and ideological developments was the rapid undermining of the process of ‘racial formation’ constructed around a ‘black’ identity so that by the mid-1980s, a major vacuum existed within the ‘non-white’ communities about how best to combat racism. It is important to remember that whilst resistance to racism and exclusionary practices organised around a ‘black’ identity declined, racism remained strongly evident within the British social formation (Virdee 1995; 1997; Modood et al 1997). Especially pertinent in this regard was the growth in Islamophobia in western Europe, including Britain, partly as a result of the direction that the Iranian revolution took, the Rushdie affair and more local events like the Honeyford Affair (Solomos 1993; Gabriel 1994; Sayyid 1997). It was against this

background that anti-racist action began to take on a religious character in Britain. ‘Pakistanis’, already economically marginalised due to the industrial re-structuring of the contemporary social formation, now found themselves subject to racism which placed growing emphasis on the negative signification of their religious beliefs. Hence, as Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992: 55) argue:

Since the ‘Rushdie affair’, the exclusion of minority religions from the national collectivity has started a process of racialisation that especially relates to Muslims. People who used to be known for the place of origin, or even as ‘people of colour’ have become identified by their assumed religion. The racist stereotype of the ‘Paki’ has become the racist stereotype of the ‘Muslim fundamentalist’.

With anti-racist action constructed around the identity ‘black’ fractured, the political vacuum was filled by ‘Pakistanis’ appropriating a resurgent Islamic ideology (Sayyid 1997) to combat the disadvantaged position they found themselves in. Nevertheless, it is important not to exaggerate the prevalence of religious formation in the contemporary social formation. There is a tendency within Modood’s critique (see 1988; 1992; 1994) (as well as Solomos and Back’s 1995) to portray such anti-racist action as constituting the norm. Yet, empirical evidence of such forms of anti-racist action, seem to suggest that they remain limited to a few demonstrations in Bradford (see Gabriel 1994) and some smaller towns. If they are widely prevalent and religious formation is the new hegemonic form of anti-racist action in contemporary Britain,

why have ‘Pakistanis’ resident in areas other than Bradford, or ‘Bangladeshis’ (who are also Muslims) not mobilised around such identities, particularly if religion represents ‘the core of one’s very being’ to Muslims as Modood (1994: 869) claims? Does this mean that only Bradford’s Muslims are ‘real’ Muslims? Similarly, why have we not seen religious formations by ‘Indians’ or ‘African Asians’ in the contemporary social formation? These questions point to the need for further theoretical and empirical research that will substantiate and clarify the nature of religious formation and its prevalence in the different ‘non-white’ communities in the contemporary social formation.

What of the inter-class nature of ‘racial formation’ that had been forged in the 1960s and 1970s? Again, just as the coincidence of a particular set of economic, political and ideological factors had cemented this alliance around a ‘black’ identity in the 1960s and 1970s, so it was that changes in these economic, political and ideological conditions during the 1980s served to undermine it. The acceleration of the process of industrial re-structuring that took place from the late 1970s which pushed a substantial proportion of ‘South Asian’ workers into self employment proved particularly decisive in undermining this process of inter-class ‘racial formation’. Whilst this shift was initially motivated by an attempt to escape unemployment and poor employment prospects in the wider labour market (Brown 1984; Jones 1993), the expansion of the racialised petty bourgeoisie was strengthened by political reforms arising in the aftermath of the urban unrest in the early 1980s, especially increased state aid in the form of urban regeneration programmes (Solomos and Ball 1990; Small 1994). For

Miles (1984: 224) these state reforms constituted a deliberate strategy on the part of the state to weaken the process of 'racial formation' around a 'black' identity: 'one dimension of the state's strategy to incorporate and diffuse dissent is the creation and support for such a class fraction'. Without necessarily concurring with the unusually conspiratorial nature of Miles' statement, the impact of such reforms was indeed to undermine the inter-class nature of 'racial formation' that had been forged during the 1960s and 1970s.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, ever increasing proportions of the racialised petty bourgeoisie were a success as evidenced by their move out of the 'ethnic niche' market and growing penetration of the wider market (Metcalf et al 1996). The consequences of such a development were that the precarious economic and political situation that had bound the racialised class fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie to the struggles of the racialised class fraction of the working class during the 1960s and 1970s were loosened and the racialised petty bourgeoisie began the process of constituting itself as an independent force capable of articulating its own distinctive political interests. One manifestation of this new found independence was the growth of organisations advancing the 'South Asian' business case in the 1980s and 1990s (Runnymede Bulletin 1996) and the attempts made by parts of the retail and banking community to harness the potential of 'South Asian' business growth by ensuring this element of the petty bourgeoisie could pursue its economic activities in the wider commercial sector

uninhibited by the adverse affects of exclusionary practices motivated by racism (Community Consultants and CAG Consultants 1994; Barclays Bank 1995)³.

Perhaps even more significantly in the long-run, is the increasing emergence of a 'South Asian' capitalist class (see Eastern Eye 1999). In a recent publication (Eastern Eye 1999: 3), it was estimated that Britain's richest two hundred 'South Asians' were collectively worth £7.5 billion with major interests in the manufacturing industry, food retailing and production, cash and carry and distribution and wholesale. There is evidence that since the mid-1980s, this layer of 'South Asians' have increasingly lent their support to the Conservative Party - the natural party of bourgeois interests (Solomos and Back 1995). There is little doubt that the class interests of this capitalist layer are likely to be increasingly at odds with the 'non-white' and 'white' workers they employ making the prospect of 'racial formation' across class boundaries highly unlikely in the future.

Conclusions

Whilst Gilroy (1987) accurately identified that the 'black' 'racial formation' project was the dominant form of anti-racist action that prevailed during the 1960s and 1970s, he went on to argue that such action negated the ability of Marxist social theory to explain these developments. In this chapter, I have contended that he was rather hasty

³ Of course, this is not to suggest that the racialised petty bourgeoisie are no longer subjected to exclusionary practices motivated by racism (see Metcalf et al 1996; Ram 1992; Ekblom and Simon 1988).

in drawing such a conclusion by demonstrating how anti-racist action constructed around a 'black' identity could be theorised and accommodated within a neo-Marxist explanation of racism and anti-racism.

The chapter showed that the basis of anti-racist action around a 'black' identity during the 1960s and 1970s lay in the operationalisation of a racism whose central component was 'colour prejudice' which proletarianised and thereby homogenised a significant proportion of migrants, irrespective of their country of origin or class background. Even the racialised fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie who, whilst technically occupying a different class position to that of the racialised working class, found themselves in a socio-economic position that was virtually indistinguishable from them. It was the recognition that the primary element of racism was the negative signification of a 'non-white' skin colour coupled with the anti-racist action being mounted by 'black' Americans in the 1960s that led many activists in both the 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' communities to conclude that united action to combat racism would be the most effective strategy to pursue. Out of these anti-racist struggles, the imposed 'racial' identity of 'black' was appropriated and infused with new meaning, creating 'black' communities of resistance (Sivanandan 1990).

However, just as the coincidence of a unique set of economic, political and ideological forces had cemented anti-racist action around a 'black' identity, so it was that changes in these economic, political and ideological conditions served to undermine it. In particular, the complex and often contradictory articulation of class processes.

racism(s) and exclusionary practices, residential and industrial location, anti-racist action and its impact on local state policy formation and the characteristics of the 'non-white' communities themselves enabled a significant proportion of 'non-white' labour to extricate themselves out of semi- and unskilled work and move into skilled manual and junior non-manual work (and increasingly the petty bourgeoisie). Significantly, this process of upward social mobility took place at a different pace for different 'non-white' groups so that it undermined the economic foundations of anti-racist action constructed around a 'black' identity.

As a result, by the mid 1980s, an ideological vacuum existed in the different 'non-white' communities about how best to combat racism. With anti-racist action around a 'black' identity fractured, other forms of anti-racist action constructed on different ideological considerations filled the vacuum. In particular, it was against this background that we saw the rise in religious formation amongst 'Pakistanis': economically marginalised for a decade and increasingly racialised because of their religion, 'Pakistanis' responded by appropriating Islam as a political identity to combat the circumstances they found themselves in. However, there is no evidence to suggest that such religious formation marked an increase in religiosity; rather it was a form of political mobilisation instigated to combat racist exclusionary practices.

When considering anti-racist action between the 1960s and 1990s, it quickly becomes clear how little theoretical and empirical work has been carried out in the workplace (for an exception see Phizacklea and Miles 1980). Since the late 1970s, the dominant

paradigms in the sociology of 'race relations' (see Rex 1991; Solomos 1993; Gilroy 1993) have developed their social theories based almost entirely on a consideration of the position of 'non-white' groups outside of work. Consequently, we know little about the ways in which the dramatic shifts that have taken place in the world of work as a result of the political and economic re-structuring of the British social formation in the 1980s and 1990s (see Grint 1991) have affected 'non-white' workers. Further, even less is known about migrant workers in the workplace in the epoch before 'race relations'. To go some way in redressing this lacunae, the next chapter sets out the importance of trade unionism for the study of racist and anti-racist action.

4 The importance of trade unionism: approach and methods

Introduction

The preceding chapters considered the ways in which different theoretical frameworks conceptualised the strategies available to ‘non-whites’ to combat racism and exclusionary practices. Yet what is remarkable about this theoretical work is how rarely it has been informed by an analysis of actual anti-racist action (for exceptions see Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Solomos and Back 1995). As Solomos and Back (1995: 1) make clear in their important study of the politics of racism and social change:

What is striking...is that little research has been carried out to explore the ways in which political mobilisations around questions of race and ethnicity actually take place, the meanings attached to them and the role that minorities themselves play as agents of political action and participants in the political system.

In the remaining chapters of this study, I want to address this lacunae by carrying out an investigation into the nature of racist and anti-racist action in one working class institution - trade unions. Whilst much has been written documenting the racism and exclusionary practices adopted by skilled ‘white’ labour in collusion with employers against ‘black’ labour during the post-war era (see Miles and Phizacklea 1977b;

Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Wrench 1987; Ramdin 1987), there has been a distinct paucity of theoretically-informed analysis investigating why trade unionists actually engage in such action.

One group of notable exceptions have been those scholars writing within the black radical tradition (see Robinson 1983). Echoing their views on the 'white' working class in general, scholars such as Sivanandan (1976; 1977; 1982), Howe (1978) and the Race Today Collective (1983) and Gilroy (1982; 1987) contend that elements of skilled, 'white' organised labour instituted racially-motivated exclusionary practices against migrant labour because they accrued both economic and ideological benefits (Sivanandan 1976; 1977; Gilroy 1982; 1987). For Sivanandan (1977: 339) the 'white' worker

...is a party to his [i.e. the black worker's] oppression. He too benefits from the exploitation of the black man, however indirectly, and tends to hold the black worker to areas of work which he himself does not wish to do, and from areas of work to which he himself aspires, irrespective of skill.

According to this perspective, the enforced location of 'black' workers to the semi- and unskilled positions in class relations contributed to skilled 'white' labour maintaining its strong bargaining position in the labour market whilst simultaneously exacerbating the racism of semi- and unskilled 'white' labour 'forced' to work alongside 'black' labour in jobs offering relatively poorer and insecure terms of employment:

...the profit from immigrant labour had not benefited the whole of society but only sections of it (including some sections of the white working class) whereas the infrastructural 'cost' of immigrant labour had been borne by those in greatest need (Sivanandan 1976: 350).

Such material gains accrued by skilled 'white' labour were accompanied by the perception of ideological benefits so that

...the attitude of racial superiority on the part of white workers relegates their black comrades to constitute a class apart, an under-class: the sub-proletariat. And the common denominator of capitalist oppression is not sufficient to bind them together in a common purpose (Sivanandan 1977: 339).

If 'white' organised labour were unlikely to challenge the racism faced by the 'black' working class, an alternative strategy centred upon a different agency had to be found. According to the black radical perspective, this strategy was 'black self-organisation'. As Howe (1978: 62) makes clear 'The black working class will be in charge,...the black struggle has an independence, validity, and vitality of its own'.

The black radical theory of trade union racism is constructed on the implicit assumption that the primary function of a trade union is to represent the interests of the *whole* working class (Sivanandan 1976; 1977; 1982). Reading this analysis, one could

easily be left with the impression that the English working class existed as an undivided ideological and structural entity before the arrival of migrant labour from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean fractured it along a 'racial' fault-line¹.

However, such an assumption ignores a vast body of work that unequivocally demonstrates that the primary function of trade unions is to defend 'the short-term interests of particular groups of workers' (Kelly 1988: 57), through the negotiation of higher wage levels and improved terms and conditions of employment. Historically, trade unions evolved by organising groups of workers around markers of difference such as skill levels created by the changing labour process and reflected such distinctions in their organisational forms. As Kelly (1988: 55-56) argues

The contours of trade unionism were shaped by the contours of capitalist industrialisation, with unions arising separately in one trade after another, each organising the various occupations created within the division of labour. In other words, the historical evolution of trade unionism imparted to it a sectional character as workers were organised in terms of their specific employment, not their general class position.

Additionally, much ink has been employed by Marxists (for an overview see Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988) debating whether the pursuit of such sectional economic struggles

¹ See Miles (1982) for a similar criticism of the work of Castles and Kosack (1985) which Sivanandan (1977; 1982) draws on.

would lead to the politicisation of the working class so that trade unions became a vehicle for radical social transformation. Although the young Marx and Engels (see Kelly 1988: 14-21) were confident that such a transformation would take place in the nature of trade unionism, the dominant thinking amongst classical Marxists including Lenin (1976) and Gramsci (1994) was that trade unions were essentially defensive organisations established by groups of workers to regulate their terms and conditions of employment firmly *within* the confines of the capitalist social formation. For Lenin (1976), the economic struggle of workers was incapable of generating a social democratic or revolutionary class consciousness where the working class recognised the importance of working class solidarity in pursuit of radical social change and transformed itself from a ‘class-in-itself’ to a ‘class-for-itself’. Instead, such economic struggles produced only a trade union consciousness, a form of restricted class consciousness which failed to fundamentally challenge prevailing ideologies, and, therefore, the capitalist social formation itself. To achieve the latter objective required a band of professional revolutionaries that would instil such consciousness into the working class (Lenin 1976; see Gramsci for a similar analysis 1994).

Two important conclusions arise from the preceding discussion about the nature of trade unionism. First, their primary function is to defend the interests of their members, not the aggregate working class as black radical theorists incorrectly assume. Second, they undertake this role firmly within the confines set by the capitalist social formation, that is, they are bodies informed by a reformist and not a revolutionary will.

To advance their primary aim of improving the pay and conditions of their membership within the confines laid down by the capitalist social formation, British trade unions have available to them a range of strategies. Amongst the most prevalent are free collective bargaining with employers at either industry or plant level; restrictive practices limiting the supply of labour available to an employer to ensure that the price of labour of those workers already employed in an industry was maintained; work-to-rule or go-slow; or, usually in the final instance, undertaking strike action, mainly involving workers in the same workgroup, factory or industry, but, occasionally, workers across different industries (see Hyman 1972; Clarke and Clements 1977). Which particular strategy or combination of strategies is deployed at any one particular moment is dependent upon several sets of factors, including the state of the labour market in which the trade union organises; the politics of trade union leaders at both a national and local level; employer strategies towards the union and its membership; the extent of state intervention in labour-employer relations; and finally, labour-employer relations more generally, or, as some put it, the state of the class struggle (Hyman 1972; Anderson 1977; Kelly 1988; Miliband 1991). Hence, trade unions have available to them a range of strategies that will not only defend the economic interests of their members against capital but will do so at the expense of groups of workers not in the industry. Herein lies the basis of an explanation that can be developed about why trade unions engage in racism and exclusionary practices.

Since trade unions are not socialist organisations imbued with a radical class consciousness that places emphasis on working class solidarity but rather sectionalist

organisations imbued with a reformist trade union consciousness, they do, on occasions, employ exclusionary practices against those elements of the working class it considers to be an economic threat to its members. Such action is not motivated by a recognition that it will result in economic gains at the expense of other groups of workers (although marginal economic gain may be a by-product of such action) but rather marks an attempt to protect what little they have in a capitalist social formation that can never guarantee their economic security. Whilst such exclusionary practices may not be in the 'true' or 'real' interests of this element of the working class because they would stand to economically benefit more through united action (see Chapter 2), the point is that according to the limited outlook that motivates trade union behaviour, that is, the defence of member interests within capitalism, they may well come to the recognition that exclusionary practices represent the best means by which to pursue this aim.

Whilst the black radical theory of trade union racism is problematic, the Marxist explanation of trade union racism offered by Miles and Phizacklea (1977b; 1978) is altogether more robust. In particular, they understand that the primary function of a trade union is to represent the interests of its members and not the whole working class (Miles and Phizacklea 1977b: 33). From this starting point they go on to explain the expression of trade union racism in the 1950s and 1960s as being rooted in the reformist outlook of trade unions which resulted in the sacrifice of international working class interests for short-term nationalist ones (Miles and Phizacklea 1977b: 34-35).

However, a problem arises with their inability to theorise the anti-racist action pursued by trade unions in the mid-1970s which they themselves identified (Miles and Phizacklea 1978; Phizacklea and Miles 1980). Instead, they resort merely to empirically identifying the social forces that led to such action without making any attempt to consider what implications this development may have for their theory of trade union racism. Indeed later, perhaps in a belated attempt to salvage their theory of trade union racism, they go on to claim that such anti-racist action was short-lived and did not in any way mark a fundamental shift in the historically negative relationship between organised labour and ‘black’ workers:

Although the TUC did organize a campaign in conjunction with the Labour Party, and although a number of policies did exhibit a more explicit antiracist position, its practice since the late 1970s leads to the conclusion that it regards the issue of racism as only of limited significance. Certainly, a number of investigations conducted by the Commission on Racial Equality have shown that trade unions and management at local level remain willing to collaborate in the practice of excluding West Indian and Asian workers from certain sectors of the labour market. The policy and practice of the TUC shows that it remains unwilling to act in a determined way to eliminate racist practices within the workplace (Miles 1988: 302).

Their failure to theorise the full range of trade union behaviour towards 'black' workers is rooted in their uncritical use of Lenin's (1976) concept of trade union consciousness. Lenin's (1976) development of this concept shows a lack of sophistication in understanding working class consciousness at work. Its primary weaknesses are its inflexibility and the polarised manner in which a trade union consciousness is associated with reformism and a social democratic or revolutionary consciousness with radical social change. Utilising this concept uncritically, Phizacklea and Miles (1980) are forced to operationalise an equally inflexible dualism where racism is equated with a reformist trade union consciousness and anti-racism with a revolutionary consciousness and radical social change. In actual fact, the concept of trade union consciousness masks a range of different forms of reformist consciousness of which two of the more important include a sectionalist consciousness and a corporatist consciousness (Kelly 1988). A sectionalist trade union consciousness is where workers identify themselves and their interests primarily with a section of their class with whom they have an immediate interest. This may include only those colleagues at their immediate place of work, sometimes referred to as a factory consciousness (Beynon 1984) or it may include all people that work in their industry. A corporate consciousness is where workers identify themselves and their interests with the corporate body and the interests of the working class as a whole within capitalism.

This alternative conceptualisation of working class consciousness at work has the distinct advantage of opening up the possibility that both racist and anti-racist action could take place within the confines of a capitalist social formation. For example, the

formation of a corporatist consciousness amongst elements of the working class which emphasised solidarity between workers across industries would certainly be compatible with the development of anti-racist action. A key question arising from this discussion is under what sorts of economic, political and ideological conditions would such a form of consciousness be likely to develop?

In answering this question the work of the German Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg (1994) is especially pertinent. Whilst Luxemburg (1994: 153-218) concurred with the dominant view amongst classical Marxists that trade unions were reformist bodies that showed little socialist inclination, her in-depth investigation of the dynamics of the mass strike in Russia in 1905 led her to conclude that there were phases in the class struggle between capital and labour where the economic demands of workers took on an explicitly political dimension and opened up the possibility of more radical social change. In particular, during those periods where the state played a highly interventionist role against strike action, Luxemburg (1994) observed that it helped to cohere the working class and led to the formation of a militant working class consciousness at work. Applying these important insights to the study of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions creates the possibility that during periods of intense class struggle, a process of ‘inter-racial’ class solidarity could emerge which would negate the racism that normally inhibits the formation of such action.

Racist and anti-racist action in trade unions in historical perspective

Taking on board these theoretical insights, in the remainder of this study, I consider the following questions. First, under what economic, political and ideological conditions did elements of organised labour engage in racism and exclusionary practices? Second, under what economic, political and ideological conditions did resistance to such racism and exclusionary practices emerge, and what precise organisational form did it take? Third, what were the strengths and limitations of such anti-racist action in trade unions? Fourth, and, finally, what implications did this have for the broader questions regarding ‘racial formation’ and working class agency discussed in Chapters Two and Three?

As the discussion of the black radical and Marxist approaches to understanding racist and anti-racist action in trade unions revealed, most work has concentrated on a highly specific time period between 1948 and 1979 (see Sivanandan 1982; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Ramdin 1987; Wrench 1987). I re-visited this period to assess what new light could be shed on understanding racist and anti-racist action in trade unions utilising the alternative theoretical framework proposed.

To achieve the objectives of this study, I drew on literature from two ‘sub-disciplines’ of sociology that rarely ‘speak’ to one another: the sociology of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ and the sociology of industrial relations. The rationale underpinning this attempt at synthesis was the recognition that neither literature by itself offered the possibility of

achieving a comprehensive understanding of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions. On the one hand, work analysing the relationship between organised labour and the 'black' worker in the sociology of 'race' and 'ethnicity' focused almost entirely on those disputes that highlighted the racist nature of English trade unionism (see for example Sivanandan 1982; Ramdin 1987; Wrench 1987) resulting in a rather one-sided account of the relationship. Importantly, with regard to the aims of this study, little attempt was made to situate and understand trade union racism in the context of the role that trade unions play as reformist organisations whose primary aim is to advance the interests of its members within the confines of a capitalist social formation. Additionally, an a priori assumption was made in much of the literature (see Sivanandan 1982) that racism in trade unions was rarely, if indeed, ever challenged. Despite such criticism, one of the undoubted strengths of the work produced within a sociology of 'race' and 'ethnicity' framework is its explicit recognition and in-depth description of the ways in which racism structured social relations within the English working class (Sivanandan 1982; Miles and Phizacklea 1977b; 1978; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Ramdin 1987; Wrench 1987; Duffield 1988).

This is more than can be said for the sociology of industrial relations. Reading the history of post-war industrial relations (see for example Clegg 1979) one could easily draw the conclusion that there were no 'black' workers in English trade unions and/or racism failed to divide the English working class. Nonetheless, this literature also has important strengths when it comes to investigating the aims of this study: the detailed description of trade union behaviour in the post-war era, especially, the strategies they

employed to advance the interests of their members is invaluable (Hyman 1972; Beynon 1984; Kelly 1988; Fairbrother 1989; Terry 1995). Through a critical reading of these distinctive literatures and their location in the theoretical framework proposed in this study, I hope to *racialise* the history of the English working class and *classify* our understanding of ‘black’ workers in such a way that an accurate explanation of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions can be developed.

It should also be noted that for the purposes of this study, the primary aim was to achieve a greater understanding of aggregate trends within the organised labour movement during this thirty-year period. The pursuit of this objective necessarily involved the sacrifice of some detail regarding the nature and form of racist and anti-racist action in particular industries and localities. This can only be achieved through the undertaking of a series of systematic studies of key industries in which ‘black’ workers were located. An excellent benchmark and a rare example of such work is Mark Duffield’s (1988) study of Indian foundry workers in the West Midlands during the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, along with Rick Halpern (University College London), I am currently engaged in an oral history project investigating the origins of racist strike action by ‘white’ workers in the West Midlands transport industry during the mid-1950s. Nonetheless, the critique of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions offered in this study represents an important contribution to understanding the relationship between trade unions and ‘black’ workers during the three decades that followed migration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean.

An important objective of this study was to extend the consideration of racism in English trade unions beyond the limited time period of 1948 to 1979. The hegemony of the liberal and black radical 'race relations' paradigms (Miles 1982; 1984) and their narrow conceptualisation of racism with the negative signification of a 'non-white' skin colour ensured that little consideration was given to racist and anti-racist action in trade unions prior to 1948 and the docking of the Empire Windrush. Fortunately, some scholars, most notably Robert Miles (1982; 1989; 1993) have demonstrated the importance of going beyond the 'race relations' problematic. By doing so, he has demonstrated that accompanying the racialisation of 'non-white' groups (see Fryer 1984; Ramdin 1987) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the racialisation of 'white' groups such as the Irish and the Jews. By utilising the conceptual framework proposed in this study, taking on board the additional theoretical insights of Miles (1982; 1993) and critically drawing on the empirical work of social and labour historians (for example Pelling 1987; Morton 1994; Hobsbawm 1990; Holmes 1988; Lunn 1985), I develop an explanation for the relationship between organised labour and the migrant Irish and Jewish (as well as 'non-white') worker in England in the century and a half prior to mass migration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean.

Racism and anti-racism in trade unions in the contemporary social formation

Whilst it is unsurprising that racist and anti-racist action in trade unions was not the subject of study prior to the arrival of migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean after WW2, it is surprising that there is such a lacunae in knowledge and understanding with regard to the contemporary social formation, especially, the past fifteen years. Whilst scholars within the sociology of industrial relations have produced a substantial body of work looking at different aspects of trade unionism during this same time period (see McCarthy 1985; Kelly 1988; Fosh and Heery 1990 and Ackers et al 1996), including work on union objectives and methods; trade unions and industrial democracy (see McCarthy 1985); trade union structure and policy (Waddington and Whitson 1995); trade union government (Waddington and Whitson 1995); factors affecting union growth; the economic effects of trade unionism (see McCarthy 1985); trade unions and the state (Crouch 1982); the politics of trade unionism (Fairbrother 1984; Fairbrother and Waddington 1990 and Kelly 1988); workplace unionism (Darlington 1994 and Terry 1995) and more recently, the relationship between women and trade unions, especially attempts by women to secure representation at different levels of the organisational structure (Heery and Kelly 1988; Cunnison and Stageman 1993; Briskin and McDermott 1993 and Lawrence 1994)), a thorough investigation of the major British industrial relations academic journals going back twenty years revealed only one article looking at racism in trade unions (Miles and Phizacklea 1978).

Similarly, within the sociology of 'race' and 'ethnicity', work investigating racism and anti-racism in trade unions has all but dried up. This compares adversely to the 1970s and early 1980s when there was a plethora of empirical studies (see Miles and Phizacklea 1977b and 1978; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Lee 1987; Ramdin 1987; Wrench 1987). One possible explanation for the lack of research in this area is the qualitative shift that has taken place in the sites on which the social processes involved in producing racialised identities and the resistance to such processes are analysed (Solomos and Back 1995). Facilitated and shaped by the predominance of post-modern social theories within sociology, the workplace is increasingly seen as a peripheral site on which to consider the significance of racism in structuring social relations (Solomos and Back 1995; Back 1996).

Yet, research carried out by the author, in collaboration with others (see Virdee and Grint 1994; Wrench and Virdee 1996) demonstrates the continuing relevance that economic class relations (see also Miles 1989; 1993) and social actors and institutions that inhabit the world of paid work have for contemporary debates within the sociology of 'race' and 'ethnicity' and the sociology of industrial relations. Nonetheless, it remains the case that apart from this relatively small body of work, little is known about the identities and strategies employed by 'black' (and 'white') workers to mobilise against racism at work, the response of trade unions to the demands made by social groups wishing to tackle racism and the difficulties such demands raise for traditional methods of union organisation and activism. This study attempts to investigate these issues and thereby re-focus attention back on to the social process of

racialisation in trade unions and the workplace - in an era which has witnessed the relationship between trade unions and employers alter significantly in favour of the latter (Edwards 1995 and Ackers et al 1996).

Trade unions as case studies

Within the history section, the primary aim was to offer an analysis of broad trends in racist and anti-racist action in trade unions over almost a two hundred year period. It would not have been feasible to consider in any great depth the particular dynamics of racist and anti-racist action in one union as compared to another. As a result, some of the micro-dynamics of understanding racist and anti-racist action in trade unions were subordinated within a broader macro-analysis. In order to complement the methodological approach taken within the history section and bring into focus the micro-dynamics of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions, a detailed investigation of a specific union using a case study approach (Stake 1995) was adopted with regard to the contemporary social formation. Within the broad aims laid out earlier in the chapter, this element of the study investigated the following questions:

1. what strategies were employed by 'black' and 'white' workers to combat racism and exclusionary practices?
2. what were the specific constellation of social forces and events that shaped the adoption of such anti-racist strategies?
3. what was the nature of opposition to such anti-racist strategies?

4. to what extent were such anti-racist strategies able to meet their aim of challenging racism and exclusionary practices?
5. what if any, on-going concerns and limitations remain in combating racism and exclusionary practices through such strategies.

Utilising a case study approach for this part of the study facilitated the construction of a dynamic interpretation of the relationship between ‘black’ and ‘white’ workers and their attempts to combat racism. Locating these actions in a specific social, economic and historical context also helped to organise the data in a way that preserved the *‘unitary character of the social object being studied’* (Goode and Hatt 1952 cited in Mitchell 1983: 191, original emphasis). Objections to case study research relate to its alleged lack of generalizability and representativeness. However, these assertions are based on an element of methodological confusion surrounding the actual purpose behind case study research. Rose (1991: 192-193) demonstrates how, under the influence of quantitative methods, representativeness has come to mean typicality in the sense of a statistically reliable random sample from a population whilst generalizability has come to mean the ability to extrapolate with statistical confidence from that sample to the population from which it is drawn. Rose (1991) contrasts this with case study research where representativeness is considered in terms of a qualitative logic for the selection of cases for study, rather than a quantitative logic of sampling from a population. Hence, Hakim (1987: 61) refers to case studies taking for their subject matter ‘one or more selected samples of a social entity’. Rose (1991) suggests that a similar logic should apply to generalizability, going on to conclude that

the critical difference between the quantitative and qualitative approaches over this issue is between ‘statistical and logical inference’:

Whereas the survey approach depends on the typicality of the sample for making valid statistical inferences about the parent population, the case study approach depends on the ‘cogency of the theoretical reasoning’ for the validity of any logical inferences from a case or cases (Rose 1991: 193).

Another important question facing social researchers is the role social theory plays in social research (Burgess 1982). The advice given by C. Wright Mills (cited in Burgess 1982: 209) was to

Be a good craftsman: Avoid any rigid set of procedures. Above all, seek to develop and use the sociological imagination. Avoid the fetishism of method and technique. Urge the rehabilitation of the unpretentious intellectual craftsman, and try to become such a craftsman yourself. Let every man be his own methodologist; let every man be his own theorist; let theory and method again become part of the practice of a craft.

Within this study, theory informed all parts of the research process ranging from the framing of the particular aims of the study; the research design; the research methods employed, to the analysis; interpretation and writing up of the study. If we consider the research design and methods employed within this part of the study, key theoretically-

informed decisions were made at several key junctures. The first of these was deciding which particular trade union to select as the case study. After some deliberation, it was decided that the National And Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO) would be the most suitable research site for the following reasons. First, due to the economic and political re-structuring of the British social formation during the past twenty years, the working class has undergone a process of dramatic re-composition so that by the early 1990s, non-manual workers, including in NALGO, were increasingly seen as representative of the new working class (Fairbrother 1989; Fairbrother and Waddington 1990). Second, despite such a re-configuration in the composition of the working class, non-manual trade unions have rarely been the site upon which the relationship between organised labour and the 'black' worker has been explored. Third, the political fall-out from the urban unrest of the early 1980s forced parts of the local state to open up non-manual employment to 'black' workers (Solomos and Ball 1990) which lead in turn to growing numbers joining NALGO.

The opening up of local state employment to 'black' workers and their subsequent entry into NALGO also meant the union came to be seen by scholars (see Wrench 1987; Phizacklea and Miles 1987; Virdee and Grint 1994) as an exemplar case of a trade union committed to challenging racism. Consequently, NALGO was chosen because it represented what Stake (1995: 3) refers to as an 'instrumental case study': one which would help to illuminate greater understanding of the processes of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions in the contemporary social formation.

Trade unions have a diverse and complicated organisational structure (Waddington and Whitson 1995) which meant that the research design for this study was particularly complex. After the selection of NALGO as the case study, the next question of design principle (Clark and Causer 1991) that had to be resolved was which parts of the NALGO organisational structure would the research focus on. Whilst some previous research has usefully demonstrated how trade union policy regarding 'black' workers evolved at a trade union federation level (Miles and Phizacklea 1977b; Miles and Phizacklea 1978; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Wrench 1987), most accounts suffer from two weaknesses. First, they offer a highly descriptive and atheoretical account of policies that trade unions introduced to combat racism and exclusionary practices (see Wrench 1987; Greater London Council Anti-Racist Trade Union Group (GLCARTUG) 1984; TUC 1991; Virdee 1992) with little attempt made to analyse and interpret the dynamic circumstances in which such policies came to be formulated or the particular social forces that supported such action. Second, many of these accounts make the false assumption that an introduction of an anti-racist policy at a national level implies that racism and exclusionary practices have been banished from the union (see for example Mason 1994). The evidence suggests however, that there is a dissonance between agreed national policy and implementation at branch level (Virdee and Grint 1994).

Consequently, an alternative approach to investigating racist and anti-racist action in NALGO was devised; one which would allow an investigation of the issues in a dynamic and fluid environment where relationships between key actors and social

groupings at different levels of the organisational structure could be studied interactively. An approach which investigated racist and anti-racist action at a national and branch level of the union was finally decided upon.

Research techniques

At a national level, the study set out to explore the nature of racism within the union; the strategies employed by NALGO activists in combatting racism and exclusionary practices, especially to identify which particular social forces within the union took a lead in such activity, the factors that motivated them, the difficulties they encountered, and, finally, their success in securing their aims. To meet these aims, a combination of research methods were employed including archival research and in-depth interviews.

Archives

Annual NALGO reports from 1976 to 1992 proved a particularly useful source of information containing details of union activity and decisions agreed at the annual conference. However, a limitation of this primary source archival material was that they represented the official union view on a particular subject after a decision had been made by delegates at the annual conference. As a result, these reports were unable to help in distinguishing between those social forces that supported particular decisions and those that did not. The verbatim accounts of the NALGO annual conference

proceedings would have been useful in helping to achieve this objective. However, visits to the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick and the TUC library at the University of North London revealed that transcripts of proceedings of the NALGO annual conference were only made up until 1962.

Fortunately, I was able to overcome this problem by drawing on an alternative source of information: the union's journal - *Public Service*. Every year, the journal carries intensive accounts of the proceedings of annual conference. Every conference issue of the journal between 1976 and 1992 was intensively examined as well as other issues where appropriate. Additionally, several sets of additional archival material produced by each of the key social actors identified including the National Black Members Coordinating Committee (NBMCC) and the NALGO National Executive Council (NEC) were also consulted. Documents assessed included pamphlets, circulars, memoranda, proceedings of black members' conferences, and circulars and memoranda from the NEC. These research techniques were supplemented in 1990, by depth interviews with key informants at the national level of the union, including representatives of the NEC and the NBMCC.

An important methodological question facing any social researcher is how to ensure that the data reported on represents a full and accurate description of the events under study. This was not always easy when consulting the archival material of key social actors within the union because they tended to place themselves in a more favourable light and their 'opposition' in a less favourable light. To ensure that the data collected

was valid and accurate inferences could be drawn from the study, a series of protocols collectively referred to as triangulation (Stake 1995: 107) were employed. In particular, a form of ‘methodological triangulation’ (Stake 1995: 117) was employed whereby archival material, including from each of the key social actors was critically analysed to see if it corroborated one another (Silverman 1993); this process of verification was further supplemented by the undertaking of in-depth interviews with a small number of leading national activists.

Selection and access

The second element of the case study was the research undertaken at branch level. The question of design principle that had to be resolved here was deciding which branches to undertake the research in. Again, a number of theoretically-informed criteria were deployed. First, in order to fully meet the aims of the study, an essential precondition was the need to ensure that only those trade union branches that had reasonable numbers of ‘black’ trade unionists were considered for selection. Through a combination of factors, including the preliminary investigation of archival material, informal conversations with leading activists within the union nationally, and the NBMCC, it was established that only the Metropolitan region of NALGO (mainly comprising trade union branches in the Greater London area) had strong levels of ‘black’ worker involvement. This finding was unsurprising given that over two-fifths of the ‘black’ population reside in the Greater London region (Owen 1992). In order to select three trade union branches, additional criteria were employed. First, taking into

account claims made by both Phizacklea and Miles (1980) and Modood (1988 and 1996) that the racialisation ‘experience’ of ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’ is not identical in Britain, an attempt was made to ensure that only those trade union branches that had activists from both these social groups were selected for the study. Secondly, it has also been claimed (see the collection of papers in Solomos and Ball 1990), that only radical Labour-run authorities enacted measures to effect major changes in the circumstances of the ‘non-white’ social groups during the 1980s. To investigate this claim further, two Labour-controlled councils and one local authority controlled jointly by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Conservative Party (CP) were selected. Arising from these considerations, Ealing, Camden and Hillingdon NALGO branches were selected.

Difficulties in gaining access to organisations is well established (see Crompton and Jones 1988: 68-70). Crompton and Jones (1988: 68) describe how in their study of white collar organisations they ‘had to endure long and often unsuccessful vetting by mostly suspicious managements before we could even commence fieldwork’. They suggest a number of useful best practices that should be employed to secure quick and effective access including the need for quick and early contact and making contact at different levels of the organisational structure. Following such advice, access to the three NALGO branches was secured by writing a letter to the branch secretary outlining the proposed aims of the study. Without exception, all three accepted the invitation to participate in the research. No doubt the informal contacts I had established promoted my credibility with these gatekeepers and was critical to ensuring

access to the research sites. With hindsight, there is no question that access was also eased by the exceptional events that were taking place during this period. Keen to have their viewpoint supported by an ‘outsider’ who also happened to be ‘black’, opponents and supporters of ‘black’ self-organisation allowed me highly privileged access to people and places that I shall discuss in more detail later in the study.

Once access had been secured, additional questions of design principle arose including whom to interview. It was decided that a key informant approach would be utilised in deciding whom to interview. According to Tremblay (1982: 98):

When we use key informants, we are not randomly sampling from the universe of characteristics under study. Rather, we are selectively sampling specialised knowledge of the characteristics.

This technique is referred to either as purposive sampling or judgement sampling (Honigmann 1982: 79-90), a form of non-probability sampling where the researcher ‘uses his prior knowledge of the universe to draw representatives from it who possess distinctive qualifications’ (Honigmann 1982: 80). Hence respondents were chosen strategically because of their personal characteristics (including sex and ‘ethnic’ origin); their place in the organisational structure and what information they were likely to yield; and finally, what contacts they were likely to provide for acquiring further information, qualities which Honigmann (1982: 80) claims ‘endow them with special knowledge’.

Two types of key informants at branch level were identified: branch officers including the branch secretary and treasurer, and the workplace representative or shop steward. It was decided to make the shop steward the fulcrum of this element of the study because of their strategic importance as intermediaries between full-time paid officers and the rank and file branch membership (Terry 1995), and because they are the primary social actor responsible for policy implementation at a local level. Since the opinions of 'black' shop stewards have rarely been the subject of scholarly investigation, it was decided to interview as many 'black' lay representatives as possible within each branch. Once the key informants had been identified, there still remained the hurdle of negotiating access at a secondary level within the branch with bodies such as the local black members' group. In two of the three NALGO branches, the local black members' group requested that I present an outline of my aims to the membership. Although there was some suspicion towards my intentions, almost everyone agreed to co-operate, with only one key informant refusing to be interviewed.

In-depth interviews

Using a semi-structured interview guide incorporating broad thematic questions that had arisen out of a critical reading of the literature, a total of 46 depth interviews were carried out between 1989 and 1992 in Ealing, Camden and Hillingdon NALGO branches (along with four depth interviews with national officers of the trade union). At branch level, these in-depth interviews were conducted with a range of trade union activists including full time officials, 'white' and 'black' lay representatives and 'black'

activists. An important feature of the proposed research design was to ensure that the study explored the salience of gender in trade unions. Consequently, it was decided that at least half the activists interviewed at branch level would be women. This target was achieved in Camden and Ealing but not in Hillingdon where there proved to be a dearth of women activists.

The interviews covered a range of themes including:

- the respondent's work biography, their occupation and their trade union position;
- their views on what the trade union had done to address the issue of racism, both nationally and locally;
- whether such measures had been successful in addressing the problem of racism?
- their thoughts on the ways in which trade unions could tackle the problem of racism more effectively.

Most of the interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours. However, there were some, particularly those with national representatives that were almost twice this length. All the interviews were tape recorded and detailed notes elicited from them. Most of the interviews were conducted at the respondent's place of work, although some were carried out outside of working hours in a local pub or cafe. Throughout the text, the names of individual activists are anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

The precise breakdown of the interviews carried out was as follows:

NALGO

National representatives (4):

- . the President of NALGO;
- . the chair of the NEC of NALGO;
- . one member of the National Black Members Co-ordinating Committee (NBMCC) and;
- . NALGO's research officer with responsibility for racism.

Branch interviews (46):

Ealing NALGO (16):

- . One 'white' branch secretary;
- . Ten 'black' stewards;
- . Five 'white' stewards.

Camden NALGO (16):

- . One 'white' branch secretary;
- . Ten 'black' stewards;
- . Five 'white' stewards.

Hillingdon NALGO (14):

- . One 'white' branch secretary;

- . Eight ‘black’ stewards;
- . Five ‘white’ stewards.

Non-participant observation

The interview data at branch level was supplemented by extensive non-participant observation at branch meetings, black members’ groups meetings and meetings and conferences of the national ‘black’ structure. This aspect of the research design helped me greatly to understand, in practical terms, how the issue of racism featured in the wider machinations of union activity.

Archival research

Finally, the data gleaned from the other two research methods was supplemented by extensive archival research within each branch, especially with regard to the local black workers’ group. This proved to be a crucial aspect of the study and served to locate the origins of contemporary debates and ‘positions’ within NALGO in their proper historical context and thereby enabled a dynamic process of change to be mapped and analysed.

Again, as with the national NALGO data reported upon, there existed an important methodological issue of ensuring the accuracy of the data collected. Silverman (1993: 157) points to the dangers of drawing inferences from data generated from a single

source of data collection when he talks of the ‘partiality of data’ collected. Similarly, Whyte (1982: 116) suggests in relation to data generated from interviews that one ought to be cautious about accepting interviewees accounts uncritically. Instead, he recommends that a ‘major way to detect and correct distortion is by *comparing an informant’s account with accounts given by other informants*’. As with the national NALGO data, a form of methodological triangulation was deployed to establish if the data collected from the different research methods corroborated one another (Silverman 1993). According to Silverman (1993: 156) triangulation is ‘particularly appropriate to the logic of qualitative research’ because it enables the data to be validated thereby ensuring that inferences can be drawn with confidence. When undertaking triangulation it is important to make an important distinction between fact and opinion. Triangulation does not represent a means by which to adjudicate on the truth; indeed, triangulation actually helps to uncover the variety of different viewpoints that may exist on a particular subject. Instead, its purpose should be to resolve unanswered questions and distinguish between fact and opinion (Silverman 1993).

Even to this day, there is a great tendency amongst researchers to suggest that there are limited ways to codify or routinise the analytical procedures of qualitative research. As long ago as the late 1960s, Robert Merton, the renowned American sociologist, called for researchers to provide:

...a detailed account of the ways in which qualitative analyses *actually* developed. Only when a considerable body of such reports are available will it

be possible to *codify* methods of qualitative analysis with something of the clarity with which quantitative methods have been articulated...This codification is devoutly to be desired both for the collection and *analysis* of qualitative sociological data (cited in Bryman and Burgess 1994: 217).

According to Burgess et al (1994: 143), it is important to view data analysis

...not [as] a discrete element of the research process which can be neatly bracketed off from the other phases of the project...[but rather as] integral to the way in which questions are posed, sites selected and data collected.

This can be demonstrated with reference to the present study where the three NALGO branches were studied sequentially. The research strategy pursued ensured that each later case built on the findings from the earlier cases, but at the same time, remained sensitive to the nuances and distinctive features of each new NALGO branch studied. This approach has been referred to by Yin as constituting a form of ‘replication logic’ (cited in Bryman and Burgess 1994: 224). A system of grids based around key themes arising out of a critical reading of existing theoretical debates were developed to form a preliminary template with which to analyse the data collected. A form of preliminary coding was carried out where the data was entered on to these grids. From this, the themes and issues that arose from the theoretical debates and which formed the basis of the initial grids were revised and re-configured so that the theoretical framework that I began with was revised in the light of the data collected (Ritchie and Spencer 1994).

However, in some instances, themes and issues that it was believed would emerge to form a central element of the analysis did not do so. An important case in point was the investigation of sexism in trade unions: no major differences emerged between male and female activists on this key issue during the course of the interviews. Informal conversations with female activists suggested that debates about tackling sexism in the union had been ‘won’ during the mid-1980s, that is, prior to the onset of this study, and that an anti-sexist position was supported by nearly all branch activists, including those within the ‘black’ self-organised groups.

Having outlined the theories, approach and methods to be used, in the chapter that follows, I begin my consideration of the relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

PART TWO

LABOUR AND RACISM: THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP

5 Racism and resistance in trade unions

before ‘race relations’: 1800-1945

Introduction

This chapter addresses an important silence in sociological understanding regarding the historical relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker and their English-born children. Until recently, the almost hegemonic influence of the weberian (see Rex 1970; Rex 1979; Modood 1992) and black radical (see CCCS 1982; Sivanandan 1982; Gilroy 1987) ‘race relations’ paradigms within British sociology ensured that the study of racism narrowly encompassed only those social groups that were deemed to be physically distinguishable from the ‘white’ population. These dominant ‘race relations’ paradigms also made an explicit (see Rex 1986a and 1986b) or implicit (see Gilroy 1987; Modood 1992) assumption that prior to the onset of mass migration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean during the late 1940s and 1950s (see Castles and Kosack 1985), there was no ‘race relations’ problematic to investigate in Britain, that is, Britain constituted a ‘racially’ homogenous country (Rex 1980). It comes as little surprise then, to find that critical analysis of the relationship between migrant workers and organised labour has concentrated almost exclusively on the post-war era and migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean (see Moore 1975; Miles and Phizacklea 1977b and 1978; Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Sivanandan 1982; Wrench 1987).

The work of Robert Miles (see 1982; 1993) represents an important counter to the 'race relations' paradigms. Importantly, he has demonstrated the importance of going beyond operationalising an understanding of 'race' (be it biologically or socially constructed) that is inextricably tied to 'non-white' social groups. From this theoretical starting point, he has demonstrated that the two major social groups subject to the processes of racialisation and racism during the nineteenth century were 'white': the Irish and the Jews. Also, in recent years, social historians such as Fryer (1984: 10-12), Ramdin (1987: 19-100) and Holmes (1988: 6) have identified the presence of a 'non-white' population in Britain since Roman times, with a sizeable 'non-white' population having been resident in Britain since the late sixteenth century. Like the migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean that were to follow during the second half of the twentieth century, they too were subjected to the processes of racialisation and racism (Panayi 1994).

Whilst the work of Miles and the social historians has usefully pointed to the racialisation of 'white' and 'non-white' groups before 1945, their analysis has rarely gone beyond establishing that such groups were the subject of racism and racist violence. In this sense, their analysis can be seen as being rather one-dimensional with little consideration given to whether racism was prevalent across the whole of the English population; whether there was resistance to such racism amongst parts of the English population and under what social conditions such resistance emerged. As a result, the 'white' working class (and other classes) only come into their analysis as

racists; leading some scholars to refer to this type of work as being located rather narrowly within the racism problematic (Banton 1991). Nevertheless, their emphasis on the importance of studying racism historically, their identification of the racialisation of 'white' social groups and 'non-white' social groups before 1945 represent highly pertinent starting points for a critical analysis of the relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker that I wish to pursue here.

Specifically, I have three main aims in this chapter. First, I investigate whether there was any resistance to racism from either migrant workers or the English working class?

Second, I consider the precise economic, political and ideological conditions under which such anti-racist (and racist) collective action emerged. Third, I discuss the strengths and limitations of this anti-racist action to see what light it brings to bear on understanding the historical relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker. By doing this, it is hoped that a more complex sociological understanding of both racism and resistance in trade unions before 'race relations' can be achieved.

Because of the long time period under discussion, the chapter is broken down into five discrete time periods that coincide with key phases of the class struggle: 1800-1850; 1850-1885; 1885-1910; 1910-1922 and 1922-1945.

Capitalism, working class racism and Irish migrant labour: 1800-1850

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, Britain underwent an industrial revolution which led, amongst other things, to the widespread introduction of the factory system of production and a greater mechanisation of industry. The consequences of such a restructuring of the labour process was that Britain was transformed from a predominantly agricultural economy to a more industrialised one. This was accompanied by the transfer of large sections of the population into urban areas where the factories were located. It was these developments that led to the formation of two distinct, yet opposing social classes: the industrial capitalist class which owned the means of production and the working class whose members were alienated from the means of production and worked for the capitalist class in return for a fixed wage (Hobsbawm 1990; Thompson 1991).

Accompanying these major changes in Britain, and in part, determined by them, was a process of land consolidation in Ireland, especially in the north and east where large farms produced grain, meat and dairy products for export to England (Miles 1982 and Solomos 1993). This development had adverse consequences for the Irish peasantry with increasing numbers being dispossessed and ejected from the land. Similarly, in the south and west of Ireland, the small peasant holders, whose main means of subsistence was the potato were also dispossessed as a consequence of the Act of Union of 1801, the abolition of tariffs in 1824, and a more intensified form of capitalist agriculture. Coupled with these developments was the flow of cheap, manufactured goods from

Britain which stemmed the rise of industrial production in Ireland and contributed to the destruction of parts of Irish industry, including its textile trade (Miles 1982: Solomos 1993).

It was against such a backdrop of adverse social and economic change that the first mass labour migration from Ireland to Britain began. Irish peasants, finding their livelihoods increasingly undermined were forced to consider going to work as agricultural labourers on British farms acting as replacement labour for English workers that had moved to the urban areas to work in the newly-established factories. However, the ever-increasing demand for labour in the newly industrialising areas of Britain coupled with the appalling conditions faced by most small peasant holders in Ireland, what Thompson refers to as the ‘sub-subsistence economy’, caused by the potato crop failure and famine of 1821-22 and the mass eviction of peasant freeholders’ between 1828 and 1830, meant that the temporary migration rapidly took on a more permanent form (Thompson 1991: 473). With growing numbers of English workers moving out of those jobs that required arduous, unskilled physical labour and moving into the better-paid and more skilled jobs in the cotton and textile industries, the demand for unskilled labour was increasingly filled by migrant Irish labour (Thompson 1991: 473-474; Miles 1982: 130).

Apart from London, the Irish migrated to the main industrial cities in the north of England including Liverpool and Manchester (McDermott 1979). In London, they gained employment in street trading, tailoring and food (Miles 1982), whilst the

majority in the North worked in unskilled jobs like navvying on the canals and railways, the building industry, docks and the coalfields of Scotland and Wales (McDermott 1979; Thompson 1991).

Attempting to analyse the relationship between organised labour and migrant Irish workers during the first quarter of the nineteenth century is made difficult because of the enactment of the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 which prohibited the right to organise (Pelling 1987: 15). The state and employers, concerned that the newly-established trade unions represented a potential vehicle for radical working class-led social change, made illegal any combination of two or more workers which had the purpose of increasing wages or reducing working hours. If a worker was accused of these two charges, they were subject to a summary trial. This legislation had a great impact on the newly-emerging trades unions with workers being 'prosecuted in their thousands', although it was never able to completely prevent the establishment of combinations in secret (Morton 1994: 364; Pelling 1987: 16-20).

However, some indication of the nature of this relationship can be gleaned by looking at events in the workplace more generally. From this, it is possible to discern the emergence of two distinctive currents of opinion within the English working class towards Irish migrants. The first was one of outright hostility characterised by much violence (Miles 1982: 121-150). Thompson (1991: 480) describes how 'pitched battles with mortal casualties took place among railway navvies' of English and Irish descent. Drawing in part on Engels' (1987) account of the conditions of the English working

class, Miles (1982: 140) argues that much of this violence was informed by an ideology of racism whereby the Irish were viewed as a distinct social group by virtue of 'their language and/or accent, their culture and their often shabby appearance, but also by their (supposed) physical characteristics'. Such anti-Irish racism was greatly strengthened by the press and media who formulated a particular caricature which

...emphasise[d] the prognathous features of the Irish labouring class: a bulge in the lower part of the face, the chin prominent, the mouth big, the forehead receding, a short nose, often upturned and with yawning nostrils: the simianising of the Irish (Saville 1987: 38).

Hence, right from its inception as a major social force at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the working class in England was divided by racism with the English worker's attitude towards migrant labour from Ireland being 'much the same as that of the 'poor whites' to the 'niggers' in the former slave states of the USA' (Marx cited in Draper 1978: 67). Importantly, the evidence suggests that it was particular elements of the English working class, namely those English workers that worked alongside Irish migrants in unskilled jobs in parts of the cotton industry (Miles 1982), the railways and the building trade (McDermott 1979: 4-5; Thompson 1991), that drew on this prevailing racist imagery and sentiment.

The roots of such working class racism lay in the weak bargaining position such unskilled English labour found themselves in, which exacerbated concern about their

employment prospects, especially during a period where their only means of collective defence - trade unionism - had been prohibited. It was amidst such adverse circumstances that Irish migrants were taken on in these industries (Hobsbawm 1990). Importantly, there developed a perception amongst English labour (almost certainly true) that the increasing employment of migrant labour from Ireland threatened to put a downward pressure on the wages of all workers in these industries, especially where they formed a major element of the workforce. This was due to the fact that Irish labour was prepared to undertake the same work as English labour for less wages (Engels 1987; McDermott 1979; Thompson 1991). Engels (1987) discusses how an employee will not work for less than what they regard as a subsistence wage. However, what constitutes a subsistence wage will vary for each particular individual and be critically dependent upon what they regard as their measure of comparison. Engels (1987: 112-113) argued that a migrant Irish labourer's conception of a subsistence wage in England was heavily influenced by their experiences of the 'sub subsistence economy' of Ireland they had recently left behind. As a consequence, they were prepared to undertake work for relatively less wages than English workers working in the same industry, because even these wages represented a higher return than what they would have received if they had remained in Ireland. Irrespective of the motivations of Irish labour in accepting the relatively lower wages, it was natural for the social group in direct competition for these jobs, unskilled English labour, to regard migrant Irish labour with hostility and as a threat to their already meagre living standards. Marx neatly summed up the nature of this racist fracture within the English working class and its implications for working class solidarity:

And most important of all! Every industrial and commercial center in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker (Marx cited in Draper 1978: 66-67).

This explanation is critical to understanding the construction of a racist fracture within the working class in England. Some researchers have suggested that racism was an ideology generated and utilised by capital as part of a conscious strategy to divide and weaken the working class and thereby increase capitalist exploitation (Cox 1970; Alexander 1987; Callinicos 1993). However, such a view amounts to an elaborate conspiracy theory and fails to recognise the very real role played by English labour in making sense of their everyday experiences. As Miles (1982: 146) carefully points out:

Capitalist production relations do not ‘cause’ racism but they constitute the terrain upon which racism (along with other ideologies) is articulated by real people, not simply and solely to justify certain causes of action, but also to interpret their experiences of production relations and of the effects of those relations at the various levels of the social formation. Such a perspective creates

the theoretical space for the possibility that the articulation of racism within the working class may refract at least partially its own experience of the world...

Although the initial racist fracture within the working class took place as a consequence of the uneven development of capitalist relations in England and Ireland (which brought forward to England a supply of labour who were prepared to work for lower wages than English workers in these trades), once such a division was instituted, employers did take advantage of it, to further the aims of capital, specifically, to maximise their profits. Thompson (1991: 472) cites a Manchester silk manufacturer who contended that ‘the moment I have a turn-out and am fast for hands I send to Ireland for ten, fifteen or twenty families’.

‘Inter-racial’ class action in trade unions and the Chartist movement

Although the racism arising out of the defensive reaction amongst parts of unorganised unskilled English labour to maintain their material standard of living against the threat of cheap labour from Ireland was one current of opinion within the English working class during the early nineteenth century, it is possible to discern a second strand of opinion within the English working class during this period which opposed such racism and instead stressed the importance of ‘inter-racial’ solidarity to advance sectional working class interests. This is hardly surprising if we remember Thompson’s (1991: 480) assertion that it was ‘not the friction but the relative ease with which the Irish were absorbed into working class communities’: in those areas where the Irish migrants

settled, there was a high degree of inter-marriage'. Sociologists however, have never identified this second current of opinion, and, as a consequence, only a partial, simplistic and one-dimensional view of the relationship has emerged to date.

As we saw earlier, the withdrawal of the right to organise had a particularly adverse impact on vulnerable groups of workers such as unskilled and semi-skilled labour: if they offered any resistance to proposed employer initiatives to replace labour with new machinery, they were summarily dismissed and replaced by individuals from the growing reserve army of labour (Pelling 1987: 18). However, some groups of workers, who became known as the 'Luddites' responded by systematically destroying machinery and factories, what Hobsbawm (1990: 89) termed 'collective bargaining by riot', which was undermining their livelihoods. According to Thompson (1991: 652-654), Irish involvement in these 'Luddite rebellions' was strong. It was these 'Luddite rebellions' and other forms of workplace resistance that forced the government to reconsider the value of the Combination Acts and eventually led it to introduce a new Combination Law in 1824 which allowed workers to combine without fear of prosecution (Pelling 1987). This change of legal status for trade unions did not have the desired effect of dampening down the high levels of discontent that existed within parts of the working class. Instead, it was accompanied by an immediate burst of strike activity (see Morton 1994: 365-366) and it was during these first few months of legal and militant trade unionism in 1824, that the first major trade union leader emerged, John Doherty - an Irishman.

Doherty was an Irish migrant who began work in the cotton mills of Ireland before coming to work in Manchester at the onset of the nineteenth century. In England, 'John Doherty had served his apprenticeship in the days of illegality, when he became a trusted leader of the cotton spinners' (Morton 1994: 366). Doherty was the central figure in the attempts of the cotton spinners to organise themselves. Initially, he built up a cotton spinners union in the Manchester area and led strikes against the introduction of new spinning machinery which he argued weakened the operatives bargaining position. However, a series of unsuccessful strikes made him realise the need for a strong, national union of cotton spinners and he set about creating such a body. In December 1829, he was 'the moving spirit' in a conference of English, Scottish and Irish textile workers held in the Isle of Man which subsequently led to the formation of the Grand General Union of the Operative Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland (Pelling 1987: 26-27; Morton 1994: 366).

In 1830, Doherty organised another conference in Manchester which established the National Association for the Protection of Labour (NAPL) of which he became its secretary (Morton 1994 and Pelling 1987). The main strength of the NAPL lay in Lancashire but there was significant support in Huddersfield, Birmingham and Staffordshire (Pelling 1987: 27). Morton (1994: 366) described the NAPL as:

...the first trades union, or union of trades, as distinct from organisations catering for one section of workers only. It aimed at uniting the whole working class, and did actually reach a membership of 100,000...

According to Pelling (1987: 27) it comprised

...local unions of trade clubs, affiliate to a council meeting monthly in Manchester, and with a general committee of delegates meeting every six months. Regular contributions were to be paid to the central funds, which were to be used only for strikes against cuts in wages.

This brief study of John Doherty and the central role he played in the development of English trade unionism provides an important example which counters the commonly articulated view that the relationship between migrant Irish and English labour was wholly antagonistic during the first half of the nineteenth century (Miles 1982 and Solomos 1993). Despite the popularity of anti-Irish racism amongst elements of the English working class, a significant element of organised labour rendered unimportant Doherty's 'Irishness', and elected him as their representative and leader. This highlights the importance of recognising a simple but often neglected truth: in any given historical epoch, the ideologies of racism and anti-racism are likely to co-exist. In this instance, the ideology of class solidarity and John Doherty's articulation and militant defence of working class interests rendered insignificant any doubts the English workers may have had about his 'Irishness'. As Thompson (1991: 471) said of John Doherty, he became 'within a few years the greatest of the leaders of the Lancashire cotton workers'. Moreover, he was able to convince the English cotton

workers of the need for a class solidarity that went beyond national borders by uniting with Irish workers to defend their common interests as workers.

There is further evidence to suggest that workers of Irish descent played a leading role in the newly-emergent trade unionism. One employer stated to the Parliamentary Commission of 1836, that:

...where there is discontent or a disposition to combine or turn-outs among the work people, the Irish are the leaders. They are the most difficult to reason with and convince on the subject of wages and regulations (cited in O'Higgins 1961: 89).

Similarly, in 1836, a Catholic priest claimed that the Irish 'were more prone to take part in trades unions, combinations and secret societies than the English' (cited in Thompson 1991: 484).

However, this period of militant trade unionism and 'inter-racial' working class solidarity was to be short-lived. According to Pelling (1987: 29), 1834, marked 'the climax of these attempts to use unionism as a vehicle for the transformation of society', with the formation of the 'Grand National Consolidated Trades Union' whose primary aims were to

...rationalise the structure of combinations, to achieve a general control of movements for an advance of wages, and to co-ordinate assistance for strikes, especially strikes against a reduction of wages (Pelling 1987: 29).

Whilst it quickly accounted for 500,000 members (Pelling 1987: 29-30), the employers refused to retreat amidst such organised opposition from labour and when rural unrest amongst agricultural labourers began as a result of the activities of the GNCTU, Lord Melbourne, the then Home Secretary 'chose to make an example of six labourers of the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset' (Pelling 1987: 31) by prosecuting them for taking unlawful oaths for seditious purposes. They were sentenced to seven years imprisonment in Australia. Despite further mass resistance, the trade unions were unable to successfully resist employer and state encroachment of working class gains achieved through militant action. The result was the almost total collapse of trade unionism with only craft workers retaining some level of union organisation (Hobsbawm 1990; Thompson 1991).

However, the current of 'inter-racial' solidarity that had emerged during the era of militant trade union action was not entirely eradicated during this period but re-emerged on the political sphere. According to Webb and Webb (1919), it was out of this employer counter-offensive and the restrictions imposed upon legal trade unionism during this period that a political movement called Chartism was born, based upon a belief in the common identity of interests of the working class. Chartism's origins lay in the establishment in June 1836, of a political and educational body called the

London Working-Men's Association whose aim was to attract the support of the working classes. They launched a people's charter in 1838 which demanded annual Parliaments; universal male suffrage; payment of MPs; equal electoral districts; abolition of the property qualifications for MPs and voting by ballot (Morton 1994: 370). Morton (1994: 370) describes how 'These demands were accepted with enthusiasm by hundreds of thousands of industrial workers who saw in them the means to remove their intolerable economic grievances'. Morton (1994: 370) also cites Engels as declaring that the six demands were 'sufficient to overthrow the whole English constitution, Queen and Lords included'. By the spring of 1838, the six demands of the People's Charter had been drafted into a parliamentary bill which was

...endorsed at gigantic meetings all over the country. 200,000 assembled at Glasgow, 80,000 at Newcastle, 250,000 at Leeds and 300,000 at Manchester. At all these meetings the charter received empathetic approval (Morton 1994: 370).

It was agreed that in order to secure the Charter's acceptance, a campaign of large demonstrations would be organised, a mass petition to Parliament, a national convention and if the petition was rejected, a political general strike or what they termed a 'sacred month' (Morton 1994: 371).

Individuals of Irish descent played a central role in the Chartist movement with many occupying positions in the national leadership, including James Bronterre O'Brien,

commonly referred to as the 'Chartist Schoolmaster' and the main theoretician of the movement (Morton 1994: 372); Thomas Devyr, an Irish migrant from Donegal who became Secretary to the Chartist Northern Political Union (Thompson 1991: 483) and Feargus O'Connor, the leader of the Chartists. Morton (1994: 371) describes the level of personal support that O'Connor attracted from the English working class:

From the beginning O'Connor had the support of the great majority of the industrial workers, the miners and the ruined and starving hand workers of the North. This support he never lost, in spite of his many blunders and weaknesses.

Rank and file Irish involvement in Chartism was also extensive (Kirk 1985) although as McDermott (1979: 16) points out, this support varied across particular regions, being particularly strong in London, Manchester and Barnsley. Such 'inter-racial' solidarity was also reflected in Chartism's strong support for Irish independence. As McDermott (1979: 16) points out, 'O'Connor's newspaper the 'Northern Star' regularly preached the revolutionary potential of a union between Irish nationalism and the English working classes'. This unity was practically built upon on several occasions including in 1848 when:

A large contingent of Irish Confederates marched with their green banners to Kennington Common alongside the Chartists on the 10th April 1848 to present the Petition to Parliament (McDermott 1979: 17).

This 'inter-racial' solidarity was no small achievement if one takes into account press attempts to racialise the leaders of the Chartist movement with the intention to divide and thereby weaken their influence over the large mass of English workers. A central feature of these attempts at racialisation was to portray the Chartist movement as being somehow foreign and alien to English traditions. This was demonstrated during the execution of William Cuffay, a 'black' leader of the London Chartists. Fryer (1984: 242) cites the obituary in *The Times* which stated that 'Cuffey...is half a "nigger". Some of the others are Irishmen. We doubt if there are half-a-dozen Englishmen in the whole lot'.

An important conclusion can be drawn from this analysis of the relationship between English and Irish labour during the first half of the nineteenth century. Whilst recognising that racism against Irish labour (rooted primarily in the real perception that the Irish represented unfair economic competition and threatened to reduce their standard of living), represented an important feature of English working class life, it was also the case that during this same period there was, at times, an equally significant, yet almost entirely neglected current of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity and anti-racism within the English working class. It is only by recognising the importance of this current and its prevalence in the working class, that we can explain the common action taken by Irish and English Luddites against capitalist restructuring of the labour process; the election of John Doherty as leader of the cotton workers union on a perspective that emphasised international working class solidarity

between Irish and English workers; the joint involvement of rank and file workers of both Irish and English origin in trade unions and the central role played by people of Irish descent in the Chartists - the first and only mass revolutionary working class movement in Britain.

The ‘new’ model unions and the strengthening of trade union racism: 1850-1885

One writer who offers an insight into the way the relationship between organised labour and migrant workers from Ireland developed during the middle decades of the nineteenth century is Cedric Robinson (1983). His analysis is of particular importance because he is the only author within the black radical tradition that has explicitly acknowledged that a ‘white’ social group - the Irish - were subject to the processes of racialisation and racism.

According to Robinson (1983: 49), Chartism represented the high-point of ‘inter-racial’ class solidarity between English and Irish labour. In the immediate aftermath of its defeat, British capitalism underwent a period of rapid economic expansion (Hobsbawm 1990: 109). Significantly, Robinson (1983) implies that the *entire* English working class derived economic benefits from this process of capitalist expansion: ‘The English worker in the second half of the nineteenth Century began to enjoy certain of the prerequisites of a labour aristocracy in a world system’ (Robinson 1983: 50). Drawing on the Webbs’ (Webb and Webb 1919) account of the new model unions, a term used

by them to denote the new class-collaborationist spirit of trade unionism as a reaction against the often violent and revolutionary movements of Luddism, Owenism and Chartism, Robinson (1983: 50) goes on to claim that the adoption of a more cautious approach by these unions led to ‘an ideological and physical drifting apart of the two races’ so that:

From the mid-19th century on, amongst the English workers the ideology of English nationalism gained ascendancy over the counter-ideology of international class solidarity and socialist hopes (Robinson 1983: 50).

Robinson’s (1983) argument leaves one with the impression that the entire English working class derived economic benefits from the economic expansion of British capitalism during the middle decades of the nineteenth century (Robinson 1983: 50). However, as we have already seen, the defeat of militant trade unionism and Chartism led to the almost total collapse of trade union membership with only a small proportion of craft workers retaining some level of union organisation (Hobsbawm 1990; Thompson 1991). Hence, when Robinson (1983: 50) speaks of an English ‘labour aristocracy’ of trade unionists deriving economic benefits from the economic expansion of British capitalism in the 1850s he is actually referring to a very small element of the English working class whereas the vast majority of English workers were reduced to a subsistence standard of living (Hobsbawm 1990; Thompson 1991).

Additionally, Robinson (1983) argues that the material gains accrued by English trade unionists during this period were the outcome of class-collaborationist policies rather than the class struggle. This argument implies that the English capitalist class benevolently passed on the gains made through capitalist exploitation to its national working class. Whilst there is little doubt that workers in the new model unions did indeed strengthen their economic position during this period (see Webb and Webb 1919; Morton 1994), it will be demonstrated they did so through strategies based on class struggle and not class-collaboration. However, Robinson (1983: 50) is unable to grasp this point because as well as incorrectly conceptualising the class struggle as comprising solely of strike action (Hyman 1972; Clarke and Clements 1977; Anderson 1977; Kelly 1988), he fails to consider the significance of the defeat of revolutionary trade unionism and Chartism and the emergence of the labour aristocracy, by which I mean full-time trade union officials (see Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988), in shaping the types of action, trade unions would employ to advance their economic interests.

Having witnessed the demise of a trade union movement committed to militant strike action, those trade unions that survived into the 1850s became relatively more cautious about how they would go about extracting improved pay and conditions from their employers (Hobsbawm 1990: 126). Morton (1994: 378) cites the attitude expressed by the committee of the London Compositors, an early prototype of the new model unions:

Unfortunately almost all the Trade Unions hitherto formed have relied for their success upon exhorted oaths and violence...Let the Compositors of London show the Artisans of England a brighter and better example; and casting away the aid to be derived from cunning and brute strength, let us, when we contend with our opponents, employ only the irresistible weapons of truth and reason.

Such caution and conservatism was reinforced by the 'labour aristocracy' - the full time trade union officials who emerged in Britain for the first time during this period (Pelling 1987; Morton 1994). These full-time officials did not play the role of 'tribunes', acting as delegates for their members, as activists like John Doherty had done in the first third of the century, but rather became a distinctive social layer occupying a contradictory location in social relations between labour and capital, whose power as negotiators was rooted in the continued maintenance of a stable and orderly relationship between their membership and capital (Hyman 1972; Anderson 1977). On the one hand, these full-time union officials were critical as intermediaries in facilitating the gains made by elements of the skilled working class. However, on the other hand, the price to be paid by the rank and file membership for the extraction of such gains was the development in the organised labour movement, of a layer of officials with interests that were different from those of the mass of rank and file members.

Recognising the strong bargaining position that many workers in trade unions found themselves in vis-a-vis their employers as a result of the sustained economic expansion

of British capitalism between 1850-73 (Hobsbawm 1990: 109; Thompson 1991: 8-10), these trade union officials employed restrictive practices to extract improved pay and conditions from the employers. According to Morton (1994: 379), these trade unionists had ‘a tendency to discount strikes and to rely instead upon keeping down the supply of labour by restricting the number of apprentices, discouraging overtime’. Whilst this element of the English working class was able to greatly strengthen its economic circumstances through the deployment of such practices, there is little doubt that it was accompanied by the development of a highly sectionalist trade union consciousness amongst its membership which manifested itself in their negligible concern for wider working class interests. Morton (1994: 379) shows how these trade unions were ‘Rigidly exclusive and often hereditary, they catered for a labour aristocracy which had little concern for the masses outside their ranks’. Nonetheless, despite this lack of concern for workers outside their industry, it remains the case that the material gains these trade unions accrued were extracted from their employers as a result of their strong bargaining position and through their own self-activity and were not the result of the benevolent policies pursued by employers as Robinson claims.

Importantly, it was the form that the class struggle took during this period that helps us to explain the decline in support for ideas associated with working class solidarity and ‘inter-racial’ action with labour of Irish descent amongst this layer of English organised labour. The successful extraction of material gains through exclusionary practices facilitated the formation of a sectionalist trade union consciousness where workers identified their interests narrowly with members in their workplace or industry. Such an

ideological outlook failed to challenge the anti-Irish racism that was widely prevalent in society; instead, on occasions, it was used by these English workers to exclude Irish labour from key forms of employment where it was considered to represent a threat to the economic security of the English worker (Kirk 1985).

However, the rank and file worker's allegiance to such racism and exclusionary practices remained contingent on the continued extraction of material gains and was never permanent as Robinson implies (1983). If this strategy failed to deliver such gains, the rank and file worker would consider alternative forms of class-based action, including strike activity, which under particular circumstances, opened up the possibility for the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness and the undermining of the dominant influence of racist and nationalist discourses within the working class.

Additionally, whilst there is little doubt that the middle of the nineteenth century witnessed the consolidation of racist sentiment within large elements of the working class (Kirk 1985), Robinson's assertion that after Chartism, any movement that preached the ideology of working class solidarity was 'inconsequential' appears a rather harsh judgement (Callinicos 1983; Kirk 1983). Despite the changed climate of industrial relations and the continued racialisation of the Irish, there is evidence to suggest that English workers were prepared to undertake industrial action which overcame national and racist divisions. Callinicos (1983: 33) argues that the 1860s saw a revival of the English workers movement:

trade unionism made rapid strides in Britain...Political events stimulated the labour movement to think in terms of international solidarity. The American Civil War, even though it caused a depression in the English cotton industry, led the Lancashire textile workers to support the cause of the North.

More specifically, Kirk (1985: 330) has argued that 'In periods of rising industrial militancy (in 1853, 1859-61 and 1869) Irish and English cotton operatives generally acted together against the forces of capital'. This period was also characterised by continuing co-operation between English and Irish labour over their attempts to establish trade unions. In 1871, Patrick Hennessey, an Irish tailor, 'presided over a meeting which formed the Labour Protection League - a loose federation of London dockers with a large Irish membership' (McDermott 1979: 9).

It was against this background that the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), more commonly known as the First International was established in 1864 in London. Karl Marx was one of 34 members of its General Council elected at its first meeting. It brought together in one broad organisation, the radical elements of the European working class (Callinicos 1983). The IWMA emphasised the importance of constructing an 'inter-racial' working class solidarity to advance working class interests. When members of the Fenian Brotherhood were put on trial for having killed a police officer in Manchester in 1867, and subsequently sentenced to execution, meetings and demonstrations were held to protest at the sentences. In November 1867,

...a meeting of some 20-25,000 working men at Clerkenwell Green, London sent a petition to the Queen. On the day of execution, magistrates banned meetings in many places and hussars and artillery stood by in Leeds (McDermott 1979: 19).

This policy of internationalism attracted many Irish working men to join the IWMA, leading Jenny Marx to write in 1871 that ‘the Irish in London are entering the ranks of the International. Irish sections are being formed in various parts of the East End’ (McDermott 1979: 19). In 1872, Irish members of the International organised a demonstration to demand a general amnesty for Irish political prisoners which re-emphasised the existence of ‘inter-racial’ class action:

Some thirty thousand people attended, over half of them Irish. It was, as Engels noted, a significant exhibition of friendship between the Irish and the native British population (McDermott 1979: 20).

The new unionism and the (re-)formation of mass ‘inter-racial’ class action: 1885-1910

Robinson’s (1983) claim that the English working class became a labour aristocracy and assumed an irreversible reformist and racist class consciousness because of the

material gains they had reaped during the middle decades of the nineteenth century is further undermined during the 1880s and 1890s when unskilled English and Irish workers united across the 'racial' fault-line in pursuit of the right to organise.

The catalyst for such 'inter-racial' action was the increasing market penetration of the British manufacturing monopoly by French, German and American economies that caused a series of economic slumps in 1875, 1880 and 1884 (Pelling 1987: 83; Hobsbawm 1990: 127) and undermined the already meagre living standards of the unskilled working class. According to Morton (1994: 384):

The effects of the crises were felt especially in London...The East End contained hundreds of thousands of dockers, unskilled and casual workers among whom unemployment spread to an alarming extent, while their wages when they were employed were extremely meagre...

Amidst such depressed economic circumstances there emerged growing support for socialist ideas within some sections of society leading to the establishment of Marxist organisations like the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and William Morris' Revolutionary Socialist League (Pelling 1987; Hobsbawm 1990; Morton 1994; Rosen and Widgery 1994). Particularly significant was the growing popularity of these ideas amongst trade union activists who were becoming increasingly disillusioned at the inability of the new model unions and sectionalist action to protect their members from the threat of unemployment. Socialist ideologies with their emphasis on working class

solidarity and militant strike action increasingly came to be seen as the most appropriate way to arrest the declining living standards of the working class. Tom Mann, a member of the main socialist organisation of the time - the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) - wrote an influential pamphlet in 1886 entitled 'What a Compulsory Eight-Hour Working Day Means to the Workers' which exemplified this new approach:

To Trade Unionists, I desire to make a special appeal. How long, *how long* will you be content with the present half-hearted policy of your unions? I readily grant that good work has been done in the past by the unions, but in Heaven's name, what good purpose are they serving now? All of them have large numbers out of employment even when their particular trade is busy. None of the important societies have any policy other than of endeavouring to keep wages from falling. The true Unionist policy of *aggression* seems entirely lost sight of; in fact the average unionist of today is a man with a fossilized intellect, either hopelessly apathetic, or supporting a policy that plays directly into the hands of the capitalist exploiter (cited in Pelling 1987: 84).

Against this background of working class immiserisation and the growing popularity of socialist ideas, unskilled workers engaged in a period of sustained strike action to establish the right to organise and thereby improve their pay and conditions. The use of strike action was reliant on the establishment of working class solidarity. With migrant labour of Jewish and Irish descent heavily represented in unskilled work (Pelling 1987;

Morton 1994; Holmes 1988; Lunn 1985), the overcoming of racist divisions was critical if such strike action was to be successful.

Assessing the relationship between Irish and English workers during this period suggests that racism was successfully overcome. Hence, not only did unskilled English workers undertake strike action under the leadership of socialist activists, many of whom were of Irish descent, there was little evidence of racism between English and Irish workers engaged in united action to arrest their declining living standards (Pelling 1987; Morton 1994; McDermott 1979). For those engaged in such strike activity, there emerged the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness where the sectional interests of different groups of workers came to be perceived as being indivisible with the interests of the aggregate working class.

Whilst the harbinger of the new unionism were the large unemployed demonstrations led by socialists in 1886 and 1887 and the matchgirls' strike of 1888 (Pelling 1987; Morton 1994), it was a dispute over pay and working hours involving the unorganised gasworkers in east London in March 1889 that the leading role played by people of Irish descent first became evident. In order to pursue these demands effectively, the gasworkers formed a union and central to its formation was a Birmingham-born man of Irish descent called Will Thorne who worked at Beckton Gas Works. Thorne, was a member of the SDF and enlisted the support of Eleanor Marx, and several members of the SDF such as John Burns, Tom Mann and Ben Tillet to organise the gasworkers. The Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union (GLWU) was established and within

the space of four months had organised 20,000 members (Pelling 1987; Morton 1994). Faced with the threat of industrial action from a highly-organised group of workers, the employer, the South Metropolitan Gas Company, immediately conceded to their demands, quickly followed by the other gas companies (Morton (1994: 386). Such ‘inter-racial’ class action also proved to be the catalyst that led English workers to support and campaign for Home Rule for Ireland throughout Will Thorne’s tenureship as leader of the gasworkers’ union (McDermott 1979; Pelling 1987).

The success of the gasworkers acted as a catalyst for other workplaces with English and migrant Irish labour to engage in united action in defence of their material interests. Most notable were the London dockers who, faced with poor conditions of employment, including meagre wages and casual employment, took action to redress these concerns by establishing a union. Whilst Ben Tillet, a socialist and leader of the small tea warehousemen society was the instigator of this campaign to organise the dock labourers, he quickly enlisted the support of several other activists, including people of Irish descent such as Tom McCarthy, general secretary of the Stevedores, the group of workers who undertook the more skilled tasks of loading vessels, and James Toomey who subsequently became president of the Strike Committee (McDermott 1979: 10). Once organised, the dock labourers went out on strike demanding a ‘tanner an hour’ which represented an increase in wages from four pence/ hour to six pence/ hour; eight pence/ hour for overtime; the abolition of the process of sub-contracting and piecework; and a minimum employment of four hours (Pelling 1987: 88). Throughout this dispute, no evidence emerged to suggest that such significant Irish

involvement was greeted with resentment by the English dockers. Instead, any racist sentiment that may have existed was overcome in pursuit of class aims which required the formation of a strong 'inter-racial' working class solidarity. This can be further evidenced by the extent of support from other workers in the dock areas which led to the Port of London being paralysed from 20th August to 16th September:

Processions of them, led by bands, toured the docks to bring more men out on strike. Stevedores, lightermen, coal porters, and others came out in sympathy - some of them formulating their own demands upon the employers (Pelling 1987: 88).

After five weeks of the dispute, the employers conceded all the dockers demands, including the increase in wages to six pence/ hour or as Burns termed it 'the full round orb of the docker's tanner' (cited in Pelling 1987: 90). As a direct consequence of the victory, a docker's union, called the 'Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union' was established which by the end of November 1889 had over 30,000 members (Pelling 1987: 90).

The success of such 'inter-racial' class action greatly increased the confidence amongst other unskilled workers. Within a year of the dockers' victory, 200,000 unskilled workers, previously thought of as 'unorganisable' had joined trade unions (Morton 1994: 386). The growth of the 'new unionism' spread throughout the industrial areas of Britain and key to its growth were Irish activists such as Edward McHugh and Richard

McGhee, two Protestant Nationalists, who established the National Union of Dock Labourers whose main strength lay in Glasgow and Liverpool, James Sexton, a Lancashire Irishman who became its general secretary and James Larkin, a Liverpool Irishman and syndicalist was also a leading member of this union (McDermott 1979; Pelling 1987). Thus, the whole nature of trade unionism in England (and Scotland) was radically transformed by the growth of the new unionism with ‘hardly a single occupational group, from laundresses and waiters to post office sorters, which was not brought into the movement’ (Pelling 1987: 91) and central to the success of this movement was the establishment of an ‘inter-racial’ unity and the influential part played by socialist activists, many of whom were of Irish descent.

Anti-semitism and ‘inter-racial’ class action

Such ‘inter-racial’ class action was also evident when it comes to assessing the relationship between organised labour and Jewish workers. Although people of Jewish descent have been resident in Britain since the eleventh century (Panayi 1994), it was amidst the economic depression and just prior to the onset of the militant new unionism that large-scale migration of Jews from Poland and Russia began (Miles 1993; Bourke 1994). Unlike the migration of the Irish in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which was motivated primarily by economic forces, the Jewish migration was motivated by the need to escape the widespread anti-semitism and regular pogroms that took place in eastern Europe (Miles 1993). The migration continued up to World War One (WW1) with the Jewish population in Britain

increasing from 60,000 before 1881 to 300,000 in 1914 (Bourke 1994: 195-196). Almost a third of this population settled in east London (Bourke 1994), although there were also significant populations in Leeds and Manchester (Holmes 1988; Panayi 1994). Importantly, these were areas where parts of the English working class were already in great social and economic distress as a result of the British economy's deteriorating position in the world (Morton 1994; Holmes 1988).

The widespread prevalence of anti-semitism throughout all sections of British society meant that job opportunities for Jewish workers in the wider labour market were heavily restricted (Holmes 1988; Panayi 1994). Most Jewish migrants were driven to find work in small Jewish-owned enterprises in the tailoring and garment industries (Williams 1980; Buckman 1980) that were almost wholly-segregated and where the pay and conditions offered would have been unacceptable to an English worker (Holmes 1988). These employers took on Jewish workers not out of some sense of 'racial' loyalty but because they recognised the potential to extract large profits through their exploitation.

Although it was the racist exclusionary practices employed by parts of the English working class that had pushed Jewish migrant labour into these jobs, the employment of Jewish labour at these lower rates of pay aroused great hostility amongst parts of the local English working population (Holmes 1988). Holmes (1988: 68) demonstrates that parts of the local English population claimed 'that a major economic problem in this area, that of sweating, was related to the 'swarms of foreign Jews' who had 'invaded

the East End' and turned it into a sweater's paradise'. Such racist antagonism was reflected at a formal level within the TUC where at the 1888 national conference, a motion was passed contending that 'it was the duty of the trades to keep the matter [of Jewish migration] under close consideration' (cited in Buckman 1980: 223). Consequently, Jewish migrant labour found itself in difficulty on two fronts: on the one hand, they were subjected to a pernicious form of exploitation by employers from their 'own' community whilst, on the other hand, they were offered little aid to redress such grievances by the English working class, who instead subjected them to racism and blamed them for accepting such low wages. Under these circumstances, their only means of improving their terms and conditions of employment lay in independent self-activity and the establishment of Jewish unions (Buckman 1980; Williams 1980). This process of 'racial formation' although occasionally resulting in significant improvements in their pay and conditions, was unable to secure any lasting improvement (Buckman 1980; Williams 1980).

However, this changed with the onset of the new unionism in the late 1880s (Buckman 1980; Williams 1980). Socialist activists, including from William Morris' Revolutionary Socialist League made positive overtures to the Jewish unions, especially in Leeds and Manchester. Recognising that the primary source of racist friction between Jewish and English workers in the garment and tailoring industries lay in the belief that Jewish labour worked for less pay than English labour and thereby threatened the economic security of the latter, these socialist activists set about redressing this problem. They increased the bargaining power of this group of workers

by encouraging the tailors to recruit members from different industries. This led in 1890 to an amalgamation with the gasworkers union in Leeds whose leaders included Irishmen such as Maguire and Cockayne. From this position of strength, the socialist and Jewish activists set about bringing the hours and pay of Jewish workers into line with English workers. When the Jewish employers rejected a union circular calling for a uniform working day for all types of workers, the tailors undertook strike action in August 1890 (Buckman 1980). Supported by the gasworkers, the tailors quickly won their demands:

Within a few days, fifteen masters had conceded a uniform working day, and, when they were followed by a further twenty-six during the next week, the strike was effectively at an end (Buckman 1980: 234).

A series of five strikes in Manchester in the tobacco, tailoring, cabinet, boot and garment-making industries during the new unionism also emphasised, how during periods of militant class struggle and the formation of a strong class identity (i.e. a corporate trade union consciousness), English and migrant Jewish labour overcame racist divisions and engaged in 'inter-racial' collective action. These strikes also demonstrated, that Jewish activists played a central role in the growth of the new unionism taking responsibility for organising collective English and Jewish resistance in the workplace (Williams 1980). Williams (1980: 290) in summing up the relationship between organised labour and Jewish workers in Manchester argued that there were

...no signs of hostility to Jewish workers amongst English trade unionists during 1889-90: on the contrary, it was in the interests of the English labour movement to support Jewish workers in a 'levelling-up' of conditions in the workshop trades. This strategy was...the outcome of the general state of trade union development in England.

The decline of a corporate trade union consciousness and the rise of working class racism

However, as I indicated earlier, the formation of such 'inter-racial' class action is always uneven. In those workplaces and industries where socialist activists were relatively weak and exercised little influence over rank and file workers, racism continued to divide the working class in England (Holmes 1988: 68). Importantly, such racism was strengthened during the late 1890s when the threat posed by the new unionism to employer profits instigated a collective response from the employers and the state comprising the establishment of industry-wide employer federations to counter the threat of strike action and the undermining of the legal position of trade unionism (Pelling 1987: 113-114).

Although trade union leaders attempted to counter such action by establishing the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) (the forerunner of the Labour Party) to advance working class interests in Parliament (Pelling 1987: 115-121), such an

approach was unable to arrest the decline in prevalence of the corporate trade union consciousness that had helped to unite migrant Irish and Jewish workers and English workers around a class identity. Consequently, the large majority of organised labour regressed into a sectionalist trade union consciousness where concern came to be centred around local and parochial class interests rather than general class interests. It was against this background of a widespread weakening in a forceful class identity that the ideological current of racism took on an increasingly virulent form. Those trade union leaders that had supported Jewish workers and their attempts to organise themselves during the height of the new unionism, now retreated into the dominant ideological framework that racialised these populations. This was aptly demonstrated in the case of G.D. Kelley, secretary of Manchester and Salford Trades Council who

...was cheered as the champion of the sweated Jewish workers in the waterproof industry's strike of 1890 but could slip into anti-Semitic imagery with the failure of the Jewish tailors to maintain their union organisation (Lunn 1985: 5).

Within the working class more generally, there also took place a re-consolidation of anti-semitism (Holmes 1988). Although such racism amongst parts of the English working class was clearly rooted in the ways they tried to make sense of their material circumstances, there is little doubt that such racism was actively encouraged and exacerbated by elements of the state keen on deflecting attention away from the real cause of the economic ills - the economic challenge posed by the American and

European economies to Britain's industrial supremacy. Consequently, the 'Jew' became the scapegoat for Britain's economic ills and the plight of the English worker.

David Hope Kyd, a Conservative parliamentary candidate, speaking in the east end in 1903 asserted that prolonged association with Jews would lead to the 'extermination of the British working man in the East End of London' (cited in Holmes 1988: 69). Such fermenting of racism was not the preserve of Conservative politicians. In Bethnal Green in 1901, the Liberal and Radical Club passed a resolution that no candidate would be accepted if he were a Jew. Such popular agitation against Jews, rooted in their alleged cultural difference and the belief that they were responsible for the decline in living standards of the English worker created a climate of working class opinion in some areas that inevitably led to racist violence. Holmes (1988: 70-71) records racist violence against Jews in Bethnal Green, in the Leyland area of Leeds, Salford and South Wales. Jews were also denied job opportunities: in Leeds 'it was not unknown for immigrant Jews in search of employment to encounter the four-word stumbling block "No Jews need apply"' (Holmes (1988: 69-70).

The first openly racist organisation, the British Brothers League (BBL) was founded in 1902 amidst such a period of reaction. Holmes (1988: 70) described it as 'an alliance of east end workers and backbench Tory MPs such as Sir Howard Vincent and Major William Eden Evans-Gordon'. It played on the growing fears that existed amongst parts of the English working class in London and contended that Whitechapel was

becoming the New Jerusalem (Holmes 1988: 69). Holmes (1988: 296) records a meeting organised by the BBL in 1902 in the People's Palace in east London where:

...the hearty rendition of popular nationalist songs was followed by torrential speeches attacking Jewish immigrants by varying degrees of violence. Such hostility came from the mouths of Conservative MPs and spokesmen of various East End interests and resulted in shouts from the audience of "Wipe them out"“.

Such racism was exacerbated by the local press: The 'East London Advertiser', alleged that Jews were culturally different, incapable of adaptation and therefore alien to the British way of life:

People of any other nation, after being in England for only a short time, assimilate themselves with the native race and by and by lose nearly all their foreign trace. But the Jews never do. A Jew is always a Jew (cited in Holmes 1988: 68).

Miles (1993: 135-136) spells out the impact of such racism on the Jewish population:

...despite the fact that these refugees comprised only about one-third of the total foreign population, the notions of 'immigrant' and 'alien' became synonymous in everyday life with that of Jew. Moreover, Jewishness was increasingly

interpreted as a quality determined by blood, and therefore as hereditary and ineradicable. References to the existence of a Jewish 'race' became common. This 'race' was signified as an alien presence that had the potential to destroy civilised society through the promotion of an international conspiracy: consequently, the Jews became the racialised 'enemy within'.

Such racism, generated from both elements of the state and the working class, led to the establishment of a Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1903 to determine the impact of Jewish labour on employment and wages. Despite its failure to come to a definite view (Holmes 1988: 45), under the circumstances described, it did not prove difficult for the government to introduce legislation in the form of the Aliens Act of 1905 to curb the entry of Jews into Britain (Miles 1993).

Trade union militancy and the continuation of racism within the working class: 1910-1922

The employers and the state were successful in curbing militant working class collective action until well into the first decade of the twentieth century when the pendulum swung back towards the working class (Pelling 1987; Morton 1994). With trade union leaders unable to arrest the decline in working class living standards caused by the rapid acceleration of inflation (Morton 1994: 438), growing support emerged for strike action to advance member interests (Pelling 1987). The number of days lost to

strike action increased from 4,576,000 days/ year between 1900-1910 to 20,908.000 days/ year between 1911-1913. Similarly, the number of workers involved in strike action increased from 240,000/ year between 1900-1910 to 1,034,000/ year between 1911-1913 (Hinton and Hyman 1975: 15, Table 1). In the years leading up to WW1, such tactics were successful in arresting the decline in 'real wages and brought a flood of recruits into the unions so that in four years, membership rose from 2,369,067 to 3,918,809' (Morton 1994: 441).

Support for such action was given further impetus with the onset of WW1 when the reformist trade union and Labour Party leaderships declared their support for the war (Pelling 1987) and adopted a resolution which effectively called for the suspension of the class struggle until the war was over:

That an immediate effort be made to terminate all existing trade disputes, whether strikes or lock-outs, and whenever new points of difficulty arise during the war period a serious attempt should be made by all concerned to reach an amicable settlement before resorting to a strike or a lock-out (cited in Pelling 1987: 140).

Additionally, trade union leaders went along with attempts by firms engaged on war contracts to relax or 'dilute' established trade practices such as the reservation of certain types of work for skilled workmen. This was most visibly demonstrated in March 1915 when union leaders and employers forged the 'Shells and Fuses'

Agreement which introduced unskilled labour to work in jobs that had previously been reserved for skilled labour (Pelling 1987: 141). Skilled workers however, were unwilling to relinquish the material gains they had extracted through their strong bargaining position and instead went on to establish unofficial workers committees to defend such gains against the wishes of the trade union leaders (Hinton and Hyman 1975: 13). This resistance also began to take on an increasingly political dimension as evidenced by the cases of strike action against conscription and making strikes illegal in the 'war industries' (Morton 1994: 459). Such industrial and political militancy continued during the immediate aftermath of WW1 with the numbers involved in strike action increasing from an average of 632,000/ year during WW1 to 2,108,000/ year between 1919 and 1921. Similarly, the number of strike days lost to industrial action increased dramatically from 5,292,000 between 1914-1918 to 49,053,000 between 1919 and 1921 (cited in Hinton and Hyman 1975: 15, Table 1).

Whilst many of the leaders of these unofficial workers committees were communists and syndicalists, who, on occasions, were able to mobilise those engaged in the industrial unrest in defence of trans-national working class interests such as preventing arms being sent to Poland to counter the newly-established workers state in Russia (see Kelly 1988; Pelling 1987), on the whole, the rank and file membership failed to move beyond a corporate trade union consciousness and remained committed to the advancement of working class interests within the confines of the capitalist social formation. This can be evidenced by looking at the fortunes of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) which despite the leading role played by many of its activists

was unable to attract large numbers of rank and file workers to the Party with membership remaining small at about 2,000 members throughout the period of the unrest (Kelly 1988: 103). This failure to gain more working class members amidst such protracted industrial unrest was in part due to the chameleon-like ability of the Labour Party to accommodate itself to the militant demands of the working class by shifting to the left during this period. It is no coincidence that it was eighteen years after its formation, in 1918 and amidst this period of militant industrial unrest, that the Labour Party adopted the now ‘infamous’ ‘Clause 4’ of its constitution which states:

To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service (cited in Miliband 1987: 60-61).

According to Cliff and Gluckstein (1988: 72), the adoption of Clause 4 signified the ‘high water mark of workers’ pressure on the Labour Party’. Hence, it was the left-wing of the Labour Party and not the CPGB that profited from the unrest: ‘Politically, 1915-22 was the period in which Labour finally displaced the Liberals as the main opposition to the Tories’ (Kelly 1988: 102) as evidenced by their increased representation in Parliament from 63 seats in 1918 to 142 in 1922.

Importantly, for the purposes of this chapter, this wave of militant strike activity and the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness remained narrowly restricted to the skilled working class in England (Hinton and Hyman 1975). For those groups of migrant workers that found themselves located within such jobs, the formation of a working class identity subsumed any differences created by racism as evidenced by the influential roles played by several people of Irish descent including James Larkin and James Connolly (McDermott 1979; Pelling 1987) and the 'inter-racial' solidarity that was forged in disputes such as the one involving the Irish Transport Workers Union (ITWU) and the Dublin Tramway Company (McDermott 1979: 34). This ITWU-led strike was supported by significant numbers of English and Irish labour in England (Pelling 1987: 128) including rank and file workers taking solidarity strike action even when threatened with expulsion by their union leaders. According to McDermott (1979: 35) 'Sympathetic strikes occurred in the Liverpool docks - followed by stoppages of railwaymen in Birmingham, Yorkshire and South Wales'.

However, the majority of Jewish and 'non-white' workers remained located in unskilled work during this period (Ramdin 1987; Holmes 1988). Consequently, by failing to spread beyond the ranks of the skilled working class, this wave of industrial unrest and the formation of a trade union consciousness that stressed the indivisibility of sectional and aggregate working class interests made little impact on challenging the racism and exclusionary practices faced by migrant workers in these jobs.

For the majority of Jewish workers who worked in the sweated trades characterised by weak working class organisation in areas where the English population were already severely affected by depressed economic circumstances, the onset of WW1 heralded a new wave of anti-semitism. A significant proportion of the Jewish population refused to fight in WW1 because of their internationalist convictions and anger towards the Russian tsarist state and its condoning of anti-semitism (Holmes 1988: 103). However, such a disinclination to fight in the war caused great discontent amongst parts of the English working class in the east end of London where it was perceived that the Jews were shirking their responsibilities to 'king and country' and consolidating their economic and social position while 'British boys' were dying at the front (Holmes 1988: 104-105). In areas where Jews were concentrated, there was a demand from local institutions to force Jewish men to go to war: Stepney Council's General Purposes, Staff and Education Committee in June 1918 demanded the calling up, internment or repatriation of all male 'aliens' of military age (Bourke 1994: 196). This renewed wave of anti-semitism was to contribute in part to the introduction of the second Aliens Act of 1919 which:

...required all Jewish 'aliens' to carry identity cards, to notify the authorities if they were to be absent from home for more than a fortnight, to eschew designated 'protected areas', and to sign special leave hotel registers (Bourke 1994: 197).

A similar reaction emerged towards 'non-white' labour during this period. Whilst 'non-white' social groups were represented in a range of jobs in the inter-war years including as busworkers (see Green 1990: 173), domestic servants and laundry workers (see Panayi 1994: 70-71), the majority were seafarers who had settled in the port areas of Bristol, Cardiff, London, Liverpool and the north-east and joined the National Union of Seamen (NUS) - the main seafarers union (see Lunn 1985; Byrne 1977; Ramdin 1987; Gordon and Reilly 1986; Panayi 1994).

Traditionally, seafaring was a highly insecure form of employment where the supply of labour greatly exceeded the demand for labour. This meant that the NUS regularly found themselves in a weak bargaining position vis-a-vis the employers, with union recognition regularly under threat. Concerned about the need to maintain at least some form of union presence (especially since this was the source of their authority and power), Havelock Wilson, general secretary of the NUS and other key full-time officials developed a highly deferential policy towards employers which included ceding to the demands of owners for wage reductions in times of depression (Lunn 1985: 13).

It was against this background that 'non-white' seamen first joined the union at the turn of the twentieth century (Ramdin 1987: 67-70; Gordon and Reilly 1986: 75) and it was unsurprising to find that the union leaderships' attitude towards them was governed by an unprincipled expediency where they failed to combat racism amongst their membership and instead utilised it to strengthen their own grip over the union. On

those occasions where the supply of labour exceeded the demand for labour, union officials, utilising prevailing racist discourses called for the replacement of ‘black’ labour with ‘white’ labour. According to Gordon and Reilly (1986: 75):

As early as 1892...the leader of the National Seafarer’s and Fireman’s Union, Havelock Wilson, complained of the displacement of ‘white’ seamen by black, and such sentiments were repeated during the national seamen’s strike of 1911 (see also Ramdin 1987: 70).

Yet when the labour market became tighter as a result of 8,000 ‘white’ merchant seaman joining the British armed forces during WW1 and a further 9,000 seamen of now hostile countries leaving to join the armed forces of their countries, it became economically imperative to employ ‘non-white’ seamen in large numbers (Gordon and Reilly 1986: 75). Amidst such tight labour market conditions, these workers were accepted without any major problems relating to racism (Byrne 1977: 262-263). Indeed, Ramdin (1987: 70) claims that ‘During the First World War, the unions ensured that an alien employed on a British ship must be paid at the going British rates’.

However, racism re-asserted itself within the union at the end of WW1 when returning ‘white’ servicemen demanded their jobs back from ‘non-white’ seamen and claimed that ‘non-white’ seamen were engaging in the practice of ‘crimping’ and undermining the attempts of ‘white’ seamen to secure employment (Byrne 1977: Lunn 1985).

Hence, the NUS utilised prevailing racist imagery to justify the replacement of ‘non-white’ labour with ‘white’ labour:

It is no use men trying to persuade us that the question of colour does not enter into national consideration, it does and very seriously. We had growing up in our midst a population, not of young Arabs, but of half-castes, which is undesirable in the extreme, and no prating of goodwill towards men of colour will alter this fact...We of this union killed the white crimp, and we are not going to stand idly by and see a coloured crimp take his place (cited in Lunn: 1985: 14).

It was not long after, that proposals to restrict the employment opportunities available to ‘non-white’ workers were implemented. Although the NUS claimed it was attempting to restrict the opportunities of ‘non-white’ foreign labour only and not ‘non-white’ English labour, it quickly became evident that such a subtle distinction was quickly lost amidst the generation of this virulent racist sentiment (Byrne 1977; Lunn 1985).

The fractional basis of collective action and the resultant formation of an uneven consciousness and its impact on racism was never more aptly demonstrated than during this period either side of WW1 where the militant collective action of skilled workers in engineering and shipbuilding was leading some scholars to speak of Britain being on the ‘brink of revolution’ (see Rosenberg 1987), whilst at the same time, the NUS. who

remained unaffected by such resistance, were instituting a racist fracture within its membership by successfully pressuring the state into introducing the 1920 Aliens Orders Act and the 1925 Special Restriction (Coloured) Alien Seamen's Order Act which effectively curbed the employment of 'non-white' labour in the industry (Lunn 1985: 13; Byrne 1977: 264).

The consolidation of racism in the trade unions: 1922-1945

Any possibility that the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness amongst parts of the skilled working class would spread to the unskilled and thereby help to undermine the rationale for racism and exclusionary practices was firmly extinguished by the onset of the economic depression of the early 1930s (Hobsbawm 1990). Specifically, the depression contributed to a dramatic decline in trade union membership from 35 per cent of the total labour force between 1920-24 to 24 per cent between 1930-34 (Grint 1991: 170, Table 7). With trade union strength greatly weakened, the number of workers involved in strike action declined from 1,061,000 between 1920-24 to 289,000 between 1930-34 and the number of strike days lost declined from 30,277,000 to 3,980,000 over the same time period (Grint 1991: 170; Table 7). The highly vulnerable position trade unions found themselves in, especially after the defeat of the General Strike in 1926 (see Cliff and Gluckstein 1988) was further reinforced by the state's enactment of the Trades Disputes Act in 1927 which made secondary strike action illegal. With rank and file support for the current of

collective action greatly weakened, the highly deferential current of 'compromise before conflict' trade unionism represented by the 'Mond-Turner' agreement of 1928 (Pelling 1987) and designed to promote harmonious industrial relations came to exercise a growing hold over trade unionists.

Under such circumstances, anti-racist action within trade unions became synonymous with workers and activists who supported or were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) (Piratin 1978; Callaghan 1995; Watson 1996). It was demonstrated earlier how the NUS remained unaffected by the industrial unrest that took place during and after WW1 and that the union's deferential policy towards the employers meant racism went unchallenged. The strengthening of this deferential current throughout much of the trade union movement in the 1920s and 1930s merely served to reinforce racist activity within the NUS.

Two particular aspects of NUS policy were responsible for the aggravation of racist sentiment. First, was the PC5 - a union form commonly referred to as the 'slave ticket' (Gordon and Reilly 1986) which seamen required before they could begin work on a ship in Britain. This requirement gave 'the union leadership and officials enormous hold over the membership. The £2 required to get a PC5 could be as much as three-quarters of the advance note (the percentage of wages a seaman received on signing on)' (Byrne 1977: 266).

The subscription rules in the NUS meant that very few seamen on shore were actually financial members of the union and meetings were dominated by the full-time officials who used pensioners to carry the votes. The union was extraordinarily over-officiated. Officials were much better paid than working seamen and it is generally agreed that in the 1930s the NUS was effectively a company union for the British Shipping Federation (Byrne 1977: 266).

Second, in 1930, the NUS and the British Shipping Federation (the ship-owners body) agreed a rota - a new system of registering seamen looking for work. This measure strengthened union power over the employment of 'black' seamen because they now had to provide evidence of their British status; in effect 'the NUS acted as a second line of police in enforcing immigration control' (Gordon and Reilly (1986: 77).

Objections to the PC5 and the rota came to the fore in 1930 when Arab seamen in the South Shields area objected to their introduction and refused to comply. The only support these workers received was from those activists and workers active in the seamen's section of the national Minority Movement - a rank and file workers organisation influenced by the politics of the CPGB (Byrne 1977: 262). In particular, it managed to successfully organise a series of large meetings in support of the Arab seamen including one where 1,100 'white' seamen and 900 Arabs and Somalis declared their support for the boycott of the PC5. They were also influential in spreading the dispute beyond the South Shields area with sympathy strikes taking place

in Liverpool, Barry and Stepney (Byrne 1977: 271). The dispute escalated into violence when the NUS and the local shipping federation attempted to replace Arab seamen with scab 'white' labour (Byrne 1977: 272). Twenty Arabs and six 'white' seamen of the Minority Movement were arrested and charged with incitement to riot: 'Virtually all charges were found proven at the trial at Durham Assizes in November and the vast majority of the Arabs were deported' (Lunn 1985: 15). Whilst the Arab seamen were defeated, the impact of such 'inter-racial' solidarity was to resonate for a long time in the South Shields area. As Byrne (1976: 274) observes it was due to such principled opposition from the Minority Movement 'that attempts by the British Union of Fascists to exploit the situation later in the 1930s were prevented'.

Although we know little of the response of the relationship between organised labour and Jewish labour during this period (Lunn 1985), some light can be thrown on to the subject by assessing developments within the working class more widely. The depression years of the 1920s and 1930s greatly strengthened the influence of racist sentiment within the English working class, especially in areas where migrant social groups and their English-born children constituted a relatively large population (Bourke 1994; Piratin 1978). One such area was the east end of London where amidst the economic depression, the far-right British Union of Fascists (BUF) opened its first branch in Bow, east London in 1934, quickly followed by branches in Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Limehouse (Bourke 1994: 199; Piratin 1978: 16). The Labour Party and trade union leaderships, dominated as they were by the ideology of compromise and

caution, did little to combat such racist activity and instead actively encouraged it by pressing:

...for control of 'foreigners' on the grounds that Jews were detrimental to the welfare of the British worker. In the Trade Union and Labour journals *Clarion*, *Labour Leader* and *Justice*, Jews were identified as a threat to British self-preservation and a menace to the working class (Bourke 1994: 200).

Jewish workers were forced to combat racism through independent self-activity and the establishment of organisations like the Jewish ex-Servicemen's Movement (Piratin 1978: 22) and the Jewish People's Council Against Fascism and anti-Semitism (Piratin 1978: 19). Apart from these Jewish organisations, only the CPGB, and, to a lesser extent, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) attempted to mount collective opposition to such racism within the English working class. Recognising that the origins of such racist sentiment lay in the poor economic conditions faced by the English working class, local Communist Party branches set about winning back supporters of organised fascism by stressing the importance of 'inter-racial' working class action to 'improve the conditions of life, in the course of which we could show them who was really responsible for their conditions, and get them organised to fight against their real enemies' (Piratin 1978: 18).

Despite the CPGB's minuscule membership (see Kelly 1988) and its relative marginalisation to working class concerns during this period, it was able to convince a significant proportion of the English and migrant labour population of east London of the importance of combatting the activities of the BUF. This was most famously demonstrated during the Battle of Cable Street in 1936 (Cable Street Group 1995; Piratin 1978). When the BUF announced its plans to march through an area of high Jewish concentration to build support for the forthcoming London County Council elections in 1937, the Communist Party organised a counter-demonstration around the slogan of 'The Fascists shall not pass' - a slogan inspired by the resistance of Madriderios in defence of Madrid against fascists (Piratin 1978: 20).

Despite attempts by the Labour Party and trade union leaderships to prevent its members and supporters from participating in the demonstration (Piratin 1978: 20), 'the appeal of the Communist Party was responded to by thousands of Labour Party members and supporters' (Piratin 1978: 20):

In one of the most spectacular mass mobilisations of modern British political history, half a million anti-fascist protestors took to the streets around Gardiners' Corner at Aldgate, the gateway to the East End' (Cable Street Group 1995: 2).

During the war, it was the Communist Party again that led opposition to anti-semitism and it was because of such anti-fascist activity, that growing numbers of Jews joined

the Communist Party during this period and eventually led it to establish the National Jewish Committee to help develop a theoretical perspective on anti-semitism (Srebnik 1989). The Communist Party were rewarded for their anti-fascist work in the 1945 General Election, when Phil Piratin, a leading activist of the Battle of Cable Street was elected as one of only two Communist Party MPs (for Stepney, east London); by the election of a growing number of local councillors (Piratin 1978); and by a substantial increase in its membership (Kelly 1988).

Despite such successes in the wider community, the Communist Party appears to have been unable to mount large-scale effective collective resistance to racism and exclusionary practices at work. Although it exercised some influence in key industries such as engineering, coalmining and shipyards (see Fishman 1995) and also had significant numbers of Jewish (see Srebnik 1989) although only a handful of 'black' members (see Callaghan 1995: 13), the CPGB's influence did not extend to those workplaces where migrant workers, especially 'non-white' workers, found themselves located in during this period. As a result, these workers found themselves regularly subjected to racism and exclusionary practices arising from the joint actions of trade unions and employers, including the operation of a 'colour-bar' at major workplaces such as Ford Dagenham, Vickers, Napiers and Tate and Lyle (Watson 1996: 154).

Conclusions

This chapter has investigated the historical relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker stretching back over a century and a half. It has shown that racism has been a feature of the labour movement since its inception during the late eighteenth century. However, the articulation of racism was found to be uneven across the working class, in particular, it was more widely prevalent amongst those workers who found themselves in direct economic competition with migrant labour. This highlights the importance of understanding that the articulation of racism is related to the class formation of migrant labour, that is, racism is likely to arise in those industries and areas in which migrant labour constitute a significant proportion of the workforce. Hence, during the first half of the nineteenth century, racism tended to emanate in particular from unskilled English labour working on the railways and roads who found their jobs under threat from cheaper labour from Ireland. Similarly, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, English workers in the east end of London subjected the newly-arrived Jewish population to a virulent form of racism because they believed they were undermining their already poor living standards by working in the sweated trades for meagre wages. Whilst there is little doubt that the articulation of racism within the English working class throughout this period was the means by which they made sense of their socio-economic circumstances and not an attempt by the ruling class to divide the working class as some Marxists have previously claimed (see Cox 1970; Alexander 1987), evidence does suggest that the ruling class actively encouraged such divisions within the working class once they were in place as a means of

deflecting attention away from the real causes of poor wages and employment prospects.

Importantly, it was found that the current of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity and anti-racism was also evident, especially during periods of intense class-struggle involving sustained bouts of strike activity by large numbers of organised labour. Under such social conditions where the construction of a strong working class identity was paramount if collective action was to be successful, racism as an ideology that structured behaviour lost its purchase and was negated, leading to the formation of an 'inter-racial' working class solidarity.

It is important to note, however, that such a development of 'inter-racial' solidarity was never inevitable under such conditions; that is, the outcome of pre-ordained social forces. Rather, human agency was critical to its formation in the form of socialist activists and migrant workers stressing the importance of overcoming racism and uniting to advance working class interests. Hence, throughout the period under discussion, socialist organisations and activists and migrant workers were at the forefront of each wave of mass working class resistance including, most importantly, during the new unionism of the late nineteenth century.

However, there were also important limitations to such 'inter-racial' working class solidarity. The working class does not exist as a unitary structural and ideological entity in capitalist social formations (Hyman 1972). The labour process imparts on it a

fractional character which can adversely affect how racism is combatted. Even during the most extensive and sustained periods of strike action where the class consciousness of large numbers of people at work changed so that sectional working class interests came to be seen as being indivisible with general working class interests, large elements of organised labour (and even more so of unorganised labour) remained unaffected by such activity with no corresponding change in trade union consciousness. If migrant workers were located in such industries, the evidence suggests they continued to be subjected to racism. This was most graphically demonstrated during the strike wave of 1910-22 where large numbers of skilled organised labour engaged in mass collective action leading to the formation of a strong class identity whilst large numbers of unskilled migrant workers (apart from the Irish) continued to be subject to racism and exclusionary practices because they found themselves located in industries unaffected by such action.

Another important limitation to the current of 'inter-racial' solidarity which developed during periods of sustained class struggle was its highly temporary nature. Even amidst those periods of collective action which saw a marked change in the consciousness of rank and file workers involved in such activity, these workers, on the whole, failed to reach beyond a corporate trade union consciousness that emphasised the advancement of working class interests within the confines of the capitalist social formation. Hence, unlike many of the socialist activists leading the collective action who believed in a radical transformation of society and the creation of an egalitarian society, the majority of rank and file workers supported such activists only in so far as they believed such

tactics delivered material gains to them. As a result, when such collective action was defeated and there was a decline in a strong working class identity and socialist activists became marginalised, racism re-asserted its hold over these workers. It was during one of these periods of retreat and reaction where the forces of capital were dominant, the reformist trade union leaders exercised unquestioning control over their membership and where there was little evidence of an indigenous current of anti-racism within trade unions, that mass migration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean began during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the next chapter, I assess how organised labour responded to migrant labour under these circumstances.

6 Racism, 'black' self-organisation and 'inter-racial' class action: 1945-79

In this chapter, I consider the nature of the relationship between organised labour and the migrant worker between 1945 and 1979. As I indicated in Chapter 4, this is a highly significant time-frame because both the black radical (see Sivanandan 1976; 1977; 1982; Gilroy 1982; 1987; Race Today Collective 1983) and neo-Marxist (see Miles and Phizacklea 1977b; 1978; Phizacklea and Miles 1980) accounts develop their analysis from events that unfolded during this period. Utilising the alternative theoretical framework developed in Chapter 4, I re-visit this period to assess what new light can be shed on the following questions. First, what were the roots of racist action in trade unions? Second, under what circumstances did resistance to such racism emerge? Third, what organisational form(s) did such anti-racist action take? Fourth, what were the limitations of such anti-racist action?

A sectionalist trade union consciousness and racist action in trade unions

The rapid economic expansion of the British social formation during the two decades that followed World War Two was responsible for inaugurating a period of relative peace in the industrial and political spheres. The prevalence of tight labour market conditions meant that trade unions found themselves in a strong bargaining position vis-a-vis the employers. Under such favourable circumstances, national trade union

leaders were able to deliver real wage increases to their members through the negotiation of national/ industry-wide agreements (Clegg 1979). Additionally, within some parts of industry, these gains were supplemented by an 'informal system' of industrial relations (Kessler and Bayliss 1995: 12-14) where, facilitated by the growth of the shop stewards, groups of workers were able to wrest improved pay and conditions at plant level from employers that were far in excess of that agreed at the national level for the industry (Clegg 1979). By the mid-1960s, collective bargaining at plant level had become 'the most important level of bargaining over pay in manufacturing' (Clegg 1979: 9).

Alongside the growing importance of devolved forms of collective bargaining, shop stewards had greater independence to employ a range of other strategies to improve their members' terms and conditions of employment. One of the most important in the post-war era of full employment and scarce labour was the use of restrictive practices to control the supply of labour entering a particular plant thereby ensuring that the price of labour already working in the plant remained relatively high (Crouch 1982). If the strategies of free collective bargaining or restrictive practices were unsuccessful in achieving their goal of improved pay and conditions, then shop stewards led short, unofficial strikes, commonly known as 'wildcat strikes', often involving only the local workgroup (Terry 1995). However, contrary to public opinion of the time, a relatively small proportion of workers actually engaged in strike action during this period. Kelly (1988: 107-108) shows that in the 1950s, over 80 per cent of days lost in officially recorded disputes were accounted for by less than 20 per cent of the workforce.

Further, those groups of workers who engaged in strike action did so for relatively short periods of time, with little evidence of secondary strike action (Grint 1991).

The employers and the state acceded to trade union demands without offering much resistance recognising that such concessions were unlikely to harm profits in an epoch of rapid capitalist accumulation. As a result, labour-employer relations were, on the whole, complementary during this period with an acceptance of the roles played by management and workers in industry. Having secured real wage increases through free collective bargaining and the use of exclusionary practices (Brown 1973; Beynon 1984) it was unsurprising to find that many rank and file trade unionists exhibited a sectionalist trade union consciousness or what Beynon (1984) refers to as a factory consciousness where they identified themselves and their interests narrowly with those colleagues at their immediate place of work. Even the shop stewards responsible for pay bargaining and leading strike action at the local level during this period articulated highly 'restrictive, sectionalist attitudes and the defence of local rather than general [working class] interests' (Verberckmoes 1996: 223; see also Hyman 1972; Beynon 1984).

In the political sphere, the widespread prevalence of this weak class identity amongst much of the 'white' working class ensured that the Conservative Party - the main party of bourgeois interests - remained in government throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. This, coupled with the active participation of the 'white' working class in the post-war political project of [re]constructing a national identity built on the twin principles of a

common citizenship (see Marshall 1950) and the 'welfare compromise' (Crouch 1977) encouraged some scholars to conclude that this period marked the negation of the Marxist model of class conflict (see Dahrendorf 1959; Bell 1960) and others to advance the thesis of working class 'embourgeoisement' (see for example Zweig 1961).

Importantly, such a weak class identity failed to challenge the ideology of racism that was widely prevalent across all sections of British society during this period (Fryer 1984; Ramdin 1987; Holmes 1988). Drawing its images from slavery and then colonialism, this racism viewed 'non-white' social groups first as 'inferior' and 'sub-human', and then as 'child like' and 'in need of civilisation' (Fryer 1984). When the post-war migrants began to arrive in England such racist stereotypes were over-determined by the development of an 'indigenous racism' whereby

...the cruder, historically specific ideas of inferiority and lack of civilisation [were] replaced by feelings of cultural difference, of 'Britishness', of 'whiteness'...White colonial and cultural supremacy was being threatened 'on the streets' in Britain as well as in the former colonies. In response, the black person was defined as 'alien', a threat to 'Britishness', a person with no right to be here (Joshi and Carter 1984: 66)

A central component of this indigenous racism was that migrant labour represented a source of cheap labour that threatened the economic security of 'white' organised

labour (Stephens 1956; Pinder 1961; Wright 1968). Hence, one branch secretary of a craft union reported:

We are continually on the look-out for employers who seek to use coloured workers for cheap labour to the detriment of their countrymen; also employers who allow coloured workers to work unlimited overtime opposed to local and national agreements between federated firms and the union (cited in Stephens 1956: 18).

Similarly, another writer highlighted the concern felt by many trade unionists about the threat posed by the potential employment of migrant labour: 'in the branches and factories the problem of jobs and wages is more directly felt and that many workers...quite genuinely feel immigrants to be a danger' (Pinder 1961: 282). In those industries where migrant workers were perceived to represent a direct economic threat to 'white' organised labour, trade union officials employed exclusionary practices motivated by racism to restrict and sometimes exclude altogether, the employment of migrant labour. Hence, the action taken by trade unions to defend the interests of their members (and the resultant sectionalist trade union consciousness) developed in ways that was racist (Moore 1975; Fryer 1984; Wrench 1987; Ramdin 1987). The use of racism and exclusionary practices was particularly evident amongst those workers employed in the transport industry and the declining areas of textiles and foundry work (Duffield 1988) where Fryer (1984: 376), shows 'white trade unionist's resisted the employment of black workers, or insisted on a 'quota' system limiting them to... about

5 per cent.’ When such racist practices came under threat of being breached, ‘white’ workers took industrial action to defend them. In February 1955, in the West Midlands, ‘white’ workers at the West Bromwich Corporation Transport system began a series of Saturday strikes in protest against the employment of an Indian trainee conductor. Also in 1955, ‘white’ transport workers in Wolverhampton decided to ban all overtime from the 1st September in protest against the increasing employment of ‘black’ labour. The local union contended that the five per cent quota which had been informally agreed with management had been breached because 68 of the 900 total workforce were ‘black’ workers (Wrench 1987; Ramdin 1987: 200). There were also other racist exclusionary practices agreed between ‘white’ trade unionists and employers which served to impact adversely on ‘black’ workers: the principle of ‘last in first out’ was not applied at a time of redundancy if it meant that ‘white’ workers would lose their jobs before ‘black’ workers (Wrench 1987: 165). Hence, Stephens (1956: 16) found that one ‘official of a general union thought that in the event of redundancy occurring his members would insist on coloured workers going first’.

An important point to note however, is that it was not only migrant workers that were the target of exclusionary practices by trade unions during this period as the black radical theorists imply (see Sivanandan 1982). The prevalence of a sectionalist trade union consciousness amongst much of organised labour during this period enabled many other regressive ideologies to exercise a greater hold over organised labour, including that of sexism, which ensured women also found themselves excluded from the relatively better-paid jobs (Boston 1987).

On the whole, individual trade unions at a national level failed to counter the racist sentiment and actions of many of their members:

...national trade union bodies do not exert sufficient drive to combat this confusion among certain of the rank and file, and all too often confine themselves to a declaration of where they stand without attempting to carry all their members with them (Pinder 1961: 283).

A survey carried out in the mid-1950s of 61 trade union branches demonstrated that trade union action to challenge racism at an individual branch level was also minimal and very much at the level of policy formation: of 22 trade unions branches that had 'non-white' workers, only five were found to have passed resolutions in favour of equal treatment (Stephens 1956: 18). Instead, racist motions from transport workers to the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) annual conference were passed demanding that 'black' workers be banned from the buses while hospital branches of Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) passed resolutions objecting to the recruitment of 'Caribbean' nurses (Wrench 1987).

One might have expected that an important source of opposition to such dis-unity in the organised labour movement would have been the Trade Union Congress (TUC). However, the TUC's powers of intervention over the specific policies of affiliated unions are limited (Martin 1980) confirming that 'the TUC is the servant of the

affiliated unions and not their master' (Kessler and Bayliss 1995: 173). As a consequence, the TUC and its executive body the General Council faithfully reproduced the dominant views of the major affiliated unions on the subject and thereby

...failed to acknowledge that there existed considerable hostility towards black workers amongst white trade unionists and increasingly came to adopt the position that the problems arose from the immigrant's refusal to "integrate" (Miles and Phizacklea (1977b: 3)

The outcome of such racism and exclusionary practices was that migrant labour came to occupy a distinctive position in class relations - as a racialised fraction of the working class (Phizacklea and Miles 1980; Miles 1982).

Racist sentiment and action was not just evident within the trade unions and in the workplace. On numerous occasions, it translated into wider racist political mobilisation and violence towards 'black' migrants. Some of the more notorious incidents in the 1950s included the racist riots against 'blacks' in Nottingham, Dudley and Notting Hill (Fryer 1984). The established political parties, Labour and Conservative did little to combat such racism, and, on occasions, actively courted the racist vote (Solomos 1993). The Labour Party accommodated themselves to the prevailing racism as shown by their refusal to commit themselves to a principled policy of de-colonisation and their support for measures to control further immigration from 'non-white' countries (Joshi and Carter 1984; Callaghan 1995: 17). Carter et al (1987) demonstrate how concern

about 'black' immigration was voiced as early as 1948. Two days after the arrival of the 'Empire Windrush', a letter was sent to the Labour Party Prime Minister, Clement Attlee by eleven Labour MPs calling for the restriction of 'black' immigration because:

An influx of coloured people domiciled here is likely to impair the harmony, strength and cohesion of our public and social life and to cause discord and unhappiness among all concerned (Carter et al 1987: 2).

By 1952, Labour and Conservative governments had 'instituted a number of covert, and sometimes illegal, administrative measures designed to discourage Black immigration' (Carter et al 1987: 3). During the October 1964 General Election in Smethwick - a small industrial town near Birmingham, the Conservative Party candidate, Peter Griffiths, publicly endorsed one of the racist slogans circulating in the town at the time of 'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour' (cited in Solomos and Back 1995: 54). Such a constellation of racist sentiment and imagery exercised a near hegemonic hold over the 'white' English population, such that:

...when black workers began to arrive here in some numbers in the 1950s, there was no progressive, anti-racist political ideological framework which would have enabled the working class to 'make sense' of a black presence in Britain (Joshi and Carter 1984: 55):

There was the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), which, as Callaghan (1995) demonstrates, consistently fought racism and fascism internationally, and, anti-semitism domestically (see also Piratin 1978). The CPGB also had some leading ‘black’ members, including its leader, Rajani Palme-Dutt, and Saklatvala, a Communist MP during the inter-war years (Callaghan 1995). By 1945, they had increased their membership to 45,435 (Fishman 1995: 116) and had two MPs elected to Parliament, including Phil Piratin, a leading participant of the 1936 Battle of Cable Street. Importantly, the CPGB had developed a strong working class base in several trade unions, including the coalmining unions and the AEU, and, according to one author (Fishman 1995: 117) such ‘increased party membership on the shopfloor was reflected in increased numbers of party members elected to full-time and lay union office’.

However, the widespread prevalence of a weak class identity meant that the CPGB exercised little influence over those elements of ‘white’ organised labour that worked alongside ‘black’ workers in the immediate post-war era. If they had, perhaps the outcome may have been different. Watson (1996: 155) demonstrates that in those few plants such as the Swift Scale factory (an aircraft parts factory) in North London which was ‘a stronghold of Communist Party industrial organisation’, a ‘black’ worker was elected as a convenor with no evidence of racist opposition. Overall, however, apart from some propaganda work attempting to highlight the debilitating effects of racism on working class solidarity (see Pinder 1961), there appears to be little evidence that the CPGB organised specific campaigns to combat racism directed at ‘non-white’

social groups in trade unions during this period. As a result, for almost three decades following the mass migration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean, no organised indigenous anti-racist current emerged to challenge the hegemonic influence of the dominant racist current of Labourism within the working class. Indeed, apart from isolated cases such as the campaign mounted by ‘black’ community organisations against the operation of a ‘colour bar’ introduced by ‘white’ bus workers in Bristol in 1955 (Dresser 1986), there was little evidence of organised resistance to such racism and practices from ‘black’ workers either (see Sivanandan 1982: 5).

‘Black’ self-organisation: the onset of anti-racist action in trade unions

This state of affairs was to alter dramatically by the mid-1960s when, with a sectional trade union consciousness continuing to facilitate the hold of a racist ideology over much of ‘white’ organised labour, ‘black’ workers began to mount collective resistance to the racist exclusionary practices they were subjected to. An important catalyst to this development were the visits to Britain, in late 1964 and early 1965 respectively, of the two leaders of the American anti-racist movement: Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Both leaders met with representatives of the ‘black’ British community and encouraged them to establish organisations to combat racism. Two national anti-racist organisations were created in their wake: the Racial Action Adjustment Society (RAAS) influenced by the ideas of Malcolm X and the philosophy of revolutionary black nationalism (Malcolm X 1970; 1994; Carmichael and Hamilton

1968) and the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) influenced by the teachings of Martin Luther King (Sivanandan 1982).

The first evidence of organised resistance to racism and exclusionary practices in the workplace emerged shortly afterwards in May 1965, when 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' workers went on strike at Courtauld's Red Scar Mill in Preston, Lancashire - a large rayon mill which produced industrial textiles. Although one-third of the total workforce of 2,400 were of Caribbean or South Asian descent, nearly all found themselves working in the low-status tyre-cord spinning department (Foot 1965).

Towards the end of 1964, TGWU officials entered into negotiations with management about a new productivity agreement for workers in this department. By spring 1965, management, the TGWU official and the four local stewards representing the tyre cord spinning department came to an agreement which in effect amounted to a 50 per cent increase in work for a three per cent increase in pay. The workers were furious and refused to accept the agreement. Eventually, the 'Caribbean' and 'South Asian' workers walked out in protest leaving only the 'white' workers to carry on working. However, not only did the TGWU fail to support the 'black' workers by refusing to make the strike official, they actively colluded with management by refusing to recognise that the strikers had a legitimate grievance. The vice-chair of the factory-wide shop stewards organisation using racist imagery told a reporter that the dispute was 'tribal' in nature while another steward claimed that '"several hotheads" are stirring up trouble for their own selfish interests' (cited in Foot 1965: 6). Although

there was no support forthcoming from 'white' trade unionists, the 'black' workers were able to continue the strike for three weeks through the active support of RAAS and individual 'white' radicals (Foot 1965).

Another strike by 'black' workers quickly followed which again illustrated both trade union inaction and racism. In 1967, at a Coneygre Foundry in the West Midlands, management precipitated a strike by 'Indian' workers through the use of 'racially discriminatory' redundancy procedures: management refused to operate the generally accepted trade union principle of 'last in first out' and selected 21 'Indians' - and no 'whites' - to go. However, the 'Indian' worker's trade union, the TGWU, refused to make the strike official and rejected the idea that racism had influenced the decision. Moreover, 'white' workers in another trade union, the Associated Union of Foundry Workers (AUFW), refused to support the strike and continued to cross the 'Indian' workers' picket line, encouraged by the local AUFW official, who explained that his members were not involved in the redundancies. Despite the obvious lack of solidarity shown by 'white' trade unionists, the strike was sustained by the support provided by other 'Indian' workers and the Indian Workers Association (IWA). It was this community support that eventually forced management to take back the 21 'Indian' workers made redundant (Wrench 1987: 166; Duffield 1988: 86-89).

Significantly, this anti-racist action was increasingly informed by the ideology of 'political blackness' (Sivanandan 1982; Shukra 1996) where 'non-white' activists appropriated the ascribed 'racial' identity of 'black' previously used to disparage

people of African descent and infused it with new ideological meaning out of which were constructed 'communities of resistance' (Sivanandan 1990) - a process Gilroy (1987) in Britain and Omi and Winant (1986) in the USA describe as 'racial formation'. Unlike in the USA however, in Britain, the construction of this anti-racist 'racial formation' project encompassed the two major 'non-white' social groups that were subjected to the processes of racialisation and racism (Miles 1982; Miles 1993) - 'South Asians' and 'Caribbeans' (Shukra 1996).

Whilst 'South Asian' and 'Caribbean' workers were beginning to collectively resist the racist exclusionary practices that had served to exclude them from skilled work, elements of the 'white' working class mobilised in support of racist politicians. When Enoch Powell, a Conservative MP and former health minister who had been responsible for the recruitment of 'Caribbean' nurses to Britain in the 1950s (Fryer 1984) made a racist speech in Wolverhampton in April 1968, warning of the threat posed by 'black' immigration to the traditional British (i.e. 'white') way of life (Miles and Phizacklea 1984), 'London dockers struck work and marched on parliament to demand an end to immigration. Three days later they marched again, this time with the Smithfield meat-porters' (Sivanandan 1982: 24). However, such racist mobilisations failed to deter the 'black' working class and anti-racist collective action continued into the early 1970s (Moore 1975; Miles and Phizacklea 1978; Sivanandan 1982; Wrench 1987).

The high-point of 'black' self-organisation as a strategy to combat racism and exclusionary practices was the Mansfield Hosiery Mills dispute which took place in the East Midlands in October 1972. Mansfield Hosiery was a company that made pullovers. The process involved three groups of workers: the 'knitters' who earned the most and who were all 'white' and the 'runners-on' and the 'bar-loaders' who earned the least and were overwhelmingly of 'South Asian' origin. The 500-strong 'South Asian' workforce had effectively been denied access to the best paid jobs on the knitting machines over a long period of time. In October 1972, a strike was called over this and other anomalies in the payment system. Management responded by agreeing to train two 'South Asian' knitters and so the strike was called off. However, almost immediately the 'white' workers on the knitting machines, fearing that their jobs were under threat, came out on strike. According to Moore (1975: 75) 'This strike had been promised by the local union leadership if the whites were, in their words, "flushed out" of the knitting jobs'. Under pressure from the local union - the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers (NUHKW) - management backtracked on its promise to train 'South Asian' knitters and instead offered them a small increase in pay. This resulted in the escalation of the dispute with 400 'South Asian' workers including 'South Asians' from another factory coming out on strike in sympathy. The company immediately dismissed these workers and began to recruit 'white' trainees for the knitting jobs. It was at this point that the union was forced to request that management stop recruiting 'scab' labour. However, it was not until the strikers occupied the union offices that the union finally made the strike official, although it still refused to call out its 'white' membership. Again the 'South Asian' strikers had to rely on the support

they received from the 'South Asian' community rather than the trade union movement to sustain the strike. Eventually, they succeeded in winning all their demands and 28 'South Asian' workers were selected for training as knitters (Moore 1975: 75-77; Wrench 1987: 166-167).

For black radical theorists like Gilroy (1987: 245) such independent anti-racist action by 'black' workers had nullified the usefulness of Marxist class theory in explaining the politics of racism and anti-racism leading him to conclude that independent 'black' action would be better conceptualised as constituting a new social movement. However, Gilroy ignores entirely the events that were unfolding during the early 1970s which bring such a conclusion into serious question. It has already been established in this thesis that the response of trade unions towards 'black' labour cannot be divorced from the wider sets of social relations that determine trade union behaviour. This starting point creates the theoretical space to contend that a change in these wider sets of social relations, especially the economic, political and ideological conditions that determine trade union behaviour, could in turn, induce a change in the trade union response towards 'black' labour. This is precisely what took place, and, by the mid-1970s, it was to have a dramatic effect on the relationship between 'white' organised labour and the migrant worker in England.

A corporate trade union consciousness and the formation of ‘inter-racial’ class action

Parallel to the beginning of organised ‘black’ resistance to racist exclusionary practices in the mid-1960s was growing state and employer concern at the poor productivity of British industry and their identification of informal trade union activity as the prime cause behind it (McIlroy 1995). Political debate came to focus on the trade unions, especially the increasing ability of shop stewards to carry out bargaining in an informal manner at plant or workgroup level. The government contended that such a development encouraged disorder, especially ‘wildcat’ strikes, and had to be curbed. As a result, the ‘shop steward became a symbol of trade union irresponsibility, and workplace conflict came to be seen as *the* major problem underlying poor productivity performance and Britain’s economic problems’ (Eldridge et al 1991: 25).

Although the Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions - the Donovan Report - reported in 1968 that shop stewards were not the problem but poor management, the Labour government continued to seek a legal resolution to the ‘problem’ of ‘wildcat’ strikes. In 1969, the government published a white paper called *‘In Place of Strife’* which outlined its proposals for curbing such activity. However, the bill was defeated due to the pressure brought to bear on the government by the trade union movement (Moran 1980; McIlroy 1995). Nevertheless, the Conservative government which took office in 1970 was able to successfully introduce an Industrial Relations Act in 1971 which replaced the collectivist laissez-faire system of industrial relations with a

comprehensive legal framework intended to restrict conflict (Moran 1980; Sheldrake 1991).

The response of the trade union movement to such proposals for change could not have been envisaged. The growing intervention by the state in employer-labour relations induced a major change in trade union strategy and resulted in a dramatic re-configuration of the class struggle. The tripartite consensus between the state, employers and the trade union leadership (Crouch 1982) which had held steady for nearly a quarter of a century now came under increasing strain from the re-surfacing of acute, conflicting class interests. Many trade union activists and rank and file workers began to recognise that their material interests could no longer be maintained solely through the operation of free collective bargaining and the use of exclusionary practices. According to Callinicos (1982: 18), this led 'to the biggest class confrontations for half a century' with the number of strike days lost increasing dramatically from an average of less than 4 million days a year during the 1950s and 1960s to 24 million days in 1972 alone (Grint 1991: 172, Table 7; see also Sheldrake 1991: 74). According to Kelly (1988: 107), a significant proportion of these strikes were qualitatively different from those of the 1950s and 1960s because 'a wide range of traditionally moderate and peaceful workers, many of them women, had embarked on strike action, many for the first time in their lives'. Attempts to curb unofficial strike activity saw the return of the political strike for the first time since the 1920s (Grint 1991). A series of one-day stoppages against the 1971 Industrial Relations Bill culminated in the TUC instructing all of its members not to comply with the Act by

refusing to register themselves as trade unions when the Bill became law. Such action was reinforced by over 500 occupations and sit-ins that took place during this period (Kelly 1988: 108-109; McIlroy 1995: 239).

These developments contributed to an uneven yet significant shift beyond the sectionalist trade union consciousness of the 1950s and 1960s to the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness where the pursuit of sectional member interests was perceived as coinciding with the interests of the aggregate working class. Critical to the organisation of this resistance were socialist trade unionists who had a political outlook that was internationalist in character. Verberckmoes (1996: 227) argues that, 'The relative strength of left-wing tendencies in the trade union movement definitely played a mobilising role in the explosion of strike activity between 1968 and 1974'. Along with left-wing Labour Party activists, activists from the Communist Party and to a lesser extent, the International Socialists (a neo-Leninist revolutionary party) exercised a growing influence amongst the rank and file membership (McIlroy 1995: 104). By the mid-1970s, it was estimated that 10 per cent of all trade union officials were Communists (Verberckmoes 1996: 227; see also Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988). The formation of a corporate trade union consciousness amongst key elements of organised labour was also reflected at a national trade union leadership level. The right-wing labour aristocracy (Lenin 1976), no longer able to deliver material gains to their members through national negotiations with employers, either shifted to the left, or found themselves replaced by left-wing trade union leaders, as evidenced by the significant leftward swings in the leadership of several major trade unions including the

Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) and the General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB) (Kelly 1988: 109).

This wave of worker insurgency and shift in class consciousness at work was reflected in the political sphere in the October 1974 General Election when the Labour Party came to power on an explicitly left-wing manifesto, including a commitment to introduce the Alternative Economic Strategy (Benn 1982) and contained within its Cabinet at least two prominent left-wingers in Tony Benn and Michael Foot (Marsh 1992). Significantly, the formation of a strong class identity (i.e. a corporate trade union consciousness) where the pursuit of sectional interests became indivisible with the pursuit of aggregate working class interests was highly significant in helping to create a more favourable ideological terrain for the development of 'inter-racial' solidarity and anti-racist action. It was during the course of the Mansfield Hosiery strike in 1972 and after almost a decade of independent anti-racist action by 'black' trade unionists that the first indications of a change in attitude within parts of the labour movement emerged. The Mansfield Strike Committee born out of the dispute but comprising representatives of 'black' political organisations, 'South Asian' workers from different areas as well as the strikers themselves was central to the organisation of a major conference for trade unionists that was held in June 1973. Three hundred and fifty delegates from all the major unions as well as representatives from 'black' community organisations came together in Birmingham and from this emerged the 'National Committee for Trade Unions Against Racism' (NCTUAR) (Sivanandan

1982). However, it was when the fear of far-right influence in the trade unions was exposed during the Imperial Typewriters dispute in 1973 (see Miles and Phizacklea 1978) that many 'white' activists recognised that racism and fascism divided the working class - a feature they could no longer afford to tolerate if working class interests against state and employer intervention were to be successfully defended.

Change followed quickly after the dispute. In particular, those groups of activists who emphasised the importance of working class solidarity began to mobilise more forthrightly on the issue of racism. The decade of struggles by 'black' workers coupled with the fear of the rise of the National Front (NF) made this layer of activists acutely aware that racism hindered the process of working class formation which was so critical to the defence of working class interests in the face of growing state and employer intervention (see Communist Party no date; International Socialists 1974; Foot no date; Communist Party 1975; Nicholson 1974). A document produced by the International Socialists in the mid-1970s for use within the workplace argued that racism 'threaten[s] the strength of trade union organisation inside the factory, and so tip[s] the balance of class power still further towards the employers' (Foot no date: 11). Similarly, a document released by a rank and file docker in the TGWU and endorsed by Jack Jones, the leader of the TGWU, argued that

The harsh reality is that the working class is divided by racialism to a damaging degree. An urgent responsibility falls upon trade union activists to seek those

remedies which can unify our class and meet head-on the racialism embedded in so much of our society (Nicholson 1974: 7).

By the mid-1970s, a re-configuration of the relationship between organised labour and the 'black' worker was underway. The TUC driven by militant activist pressure instigated policies and practices that sought to challenge the impact of racism and exclusionary practices in the trade unions and outside (Miles and Phizacklea 1978). At the 1974 TUC Annual Conference, the General Council announced that it had submitted oral evidence and a memorandum to the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration where it acknowledged for the first time that 'black' workers were subject to racism and discriminatory practices. Moreover, this evidence went on to state that 'trade unions should actively oppose racialism within their own ranks', both from the organised far-right and rank and file 'white' trade unionists (Miles and Phizacklea 1978: 199).

At the 1975 TUC Annual Conference delegates from several affiliated unions made speeches denouncing the racism and activities of the National Front and called upon trade unionists to warn their members of the dangers of racism to working class solidarity. Although a minority current of opposition to racism in the trade union movement had existed since the late 1950's (Stephens 1956: 18; Miles and Phizacklea 1978: 202), this current grew rapidly in the mid-1970's with local committees and trades councils becoming increasingly concerned about the need to tackle racism in the labour movement. Immediately after the 1975 TUC Annual Conference, the General

Council established a new sub-committee of the General Council, the Equal Rights Committee, whose main responsibility would be to develop policies to promote equal opportunity. Additionally, in 1975, the TUC General Council established the Race Relations Advisory Committee to work with the Equal Rights Committee on issues relating to 'race relations' (Miles and Phizacklea 1978: 198). In July 1976, the General Council issued a press release which called for the trade union movement to actively tackle 'racial' discrimination:

Much needs to be done to eliminate the discrimination and disadvantage facing ethnic minorities and for their part the General Council are advising affiliated unions about steps they should take to strengthen the organisation among immigrant and black workers and unity between work people (Miles and Phizacklea 1978: 199).

Hence, by the mid-1970s, there was a growing recognition, especially amongst socialist activists and the TUC, that working class solidarity could only be built by actively opposing the racism and disadvantage faced by 'black' workers. However, this was not just 'top-down' anti-racism: the most visible manifestation of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity and the rejection of racist ideologies took place between 1976 and 1978 during the Grunwick dispute (Rogaly 1977; Phizacklea and Miles 1978; Sivanandan 1982; Ramdin 1987). Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories was a firm that developed and printed colour films. There were two factories in Willesden, north west London which employed about 440 people. The dispute lasted from August 1976 to

July 1978 and was led by 'South Asian' women who worked long hours in appalling conditions for low wages.

An argument with a manager led to the dismissal of one worker which rapidly led to a third of the workforce coming out on strike. The strikers decided to establish a union and after advice from the local Trades Council, joined the Association of Professional, Executive and Computer Staff (APEX). Once they had become members, APEX immediately made the strike official and announced that strike pay would be given to the strikers. Grunwick's management responded by dismissing all the strikers. However, the strikers refused to concede, defiantly stating to the employer that: 'If you refuse to talk to us, we will turn off all the taps, one by one, until you have to' (Phizacklea and Miles 1978: 270). To achieve this objective, they required support from other groups of workers and even the black radical author Ramdin (1987: 289) is forced to concede that, 'Support for the strike from sections of the British labour movement was quick and widespread'.

At the 1976 TUC Annual Conference, Roy Grantham, General Secretary of APEX called upon the trade union movement to lend its support to the strikers. He explicitly raised the issue of racism, arguing it was central to the exploitation that 'South Asian' workers suffered. Similarly, Tom Jackson of the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) pledged support and agreed to stop the delivery of mail coming in or out of Grunwick which would effectively prevent the business from operating. It was not only senior 'white' trade unionists that offered support to the strikers but also large numbers of

rank and file 'white' workers. Ramdin (1987: 292) describes how the local people of the London Borough of Brent responded with 'donations from Milliner Park Ward, Rolls Royce Works Committee, Express Dairies, Associated Automation (GEC), TGWU, the UPW Cricklewood Office Branch'. Importantly, on 1st November 1976, the post office workers in the UPW stopped delivering Grunwick's mail.

Despite such solidarity, Grunwick's management refused to concede to the strikers' demands. As a result, the strike committee responded by calling for the trade union movement to support a mass picket of the firm for one week in June 1977, which they hoped would cause maximum disruption during Grunwick's busiest trading period. The call for support did not go unheeded with up to 20,000 pickets (overwhelmingly 'white') supporting the 'South Asian' women strikers. Additionally, local post office workers continued to stop the delivery of mail coming in or out of Grunwick despite having their strike pay withdrawn by their union, the UPW. Contracted TGWU drivers, working for the police on picket duty at Grunwick refused to drive them into the firm's premises. Delegations of London dockers and Yorkshire miners came to the picket lines and supported the strikers (Rogaly 1977; Ramdin 1987). Particularly significant was the solidarity action of the London dockers who, in 1968, had marched to the Houses of Parliament in support of Enoch Powell's racist 'rivers of blood' speech shouting 'Back Britain, not Black Britain' and demanding an end to 'black' immigration. Only one docker, Terry Barrett, a member of the International Socialists, had publicly opposed the march then (Socialist Review, April 1998: 31). Less than a decade later, on the 11th July 1977, amidst the wave of industrial militancy there was a

marked change in the attitudes of these same dockers towards 'black' labour as demonstrated when 'the Royal Docks Shop Stewards' banner headed a mass picket of 5,000 overwhelmingly 'white' trade unionists in support of the predominately 'Asian' workforce at Grunwicks' (Callinicos 1993: 61).

Although the dispute at Grunwick was eventually defeated in July 1978, it demonstrated that under conditions of acute class struggle and the formation of a strong class identity, coupled with the pre-existing independent resistance of 'black' workers, it was possible for 'white' workers to overcome the ideology of racism and undertake collective action in support of 'black' workers (see Rogaly 1977; Phizacklea and Miles 1978; Ramdin 1987 for a more detailed discussion of Grunwick).

Amidst this radicalisation of organised labour, the newly-elected Labour government introduced several important pieces of legislation to curb discrimination, including the 1976 Race Relations Act (Marsh 1992). The Race Relations Act not only made acts of direct discrimination illegal, but also acts of indirect discrimination entailing treatment which may be described equal in a formal sense between different 'racial' groups but discriminatory in its effect on one particular 'racial' group (Home Office 1977: 4-5). Despite subsequent problems regarding its effective implementation (see McCrudden et al 1991), this legislation stands today as a testimony to the change wrought by the anti-racist struggles of 'black' workers and the current of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity that emerged during the course of the industrial unrest in the 1970s.

Two important points need to be made at this point regarding the argument advanced to date. First, it should be emphasised that I am by no means suggesting that the formation of an ‘inter-racial’ class solidarity during the 1970s marked a move towards a revolutionary class consciousness amongst trade unionists. Whilst many of the activists who led this wave of worker unrest were socialists and were often members of political parties that were committed to a radical transformation of society (see Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988), the overwhelming majority of rank and file labour lent their support to these activists for reasons associated with an ‘instrumental collectivism’ (Marshall et al 1988: 143-167), in particular the pursuit of improved pay and conditions. Amidst the changing economic, political and ideological circumstances of the late 1960s and early 1970s, parts of organised labour came to recognise that collective bargaining and the use of exclusionary practices would no longer guarantee their economic security, leading them to support alternative strategies like strike action and those activists that advocated this type of action. Hence, rank and file workers engaged in ‘inter-racial’ class action on the grounds that working class divisions, including those created by racism, were harmful to the effective pursuit of their material concerns, not because they believed that anti-racist class action was an essential pre-requisite to the creation of a new socialist order.

Secondly, whilst the shift in trade union consciousness amongst ‘white’ trade unionists did facilitate the formation of an ‘inter-racial’ working class solidarity, it is important to re-iterate that the working class does not exist as a unitary structural and ideological entity in capitalist social formations (Miles 1982; Kelly 1988). The labour process

imparts on it a fractional character, which means that at any one moment in time, the class consciousness of the aggregate working class is unlikely to be identical. Hence, even during the most acute phases of the class struggle during the 1970s, where much of organised labour moved towards a corporate trade union consciousness that increasingly viewed the pursuit of sectional interests as being indivisible with the advancement of aggregate working class interests, there was an element of organised labour (and even more so of unorganised labour) that remained unaffected by such activity and continued to articulate a sectionalist trade union consciousness. It is only by recognising the fractional basis of the working class in capitalist social formations and the uneven shift in trade union consciousness that is likely to arise from it, that one can explain how, whilst one element of organised labour, comprising the large trade unions and the TUC shifted towards combating racism, another part of the working class, comprising the poorly organised and unorganised mobilised in support of the racist and fascist National Front (Husbands 1983).

However, amidst the wave of worker insurgency, many trade unionists were also prepared to combat such organised racist and fascist activity outside of the workplace. When in May 1976, the National Front gained two council seats in Blackburn (Virdee 1995) and rock stars like David Bowie and Eric Clapton lent their support to this organisation and its racist and fascist politics, a national organisation called Rock Against Racism was established in August 1976 to counter their influence (Saunders and Huddle and others 1976 cited in Rosen and Widgery 1994: 301-302). 1976 and 1977 were important years that saw growing confrontation between racists and anti-

racists culminating in anti-racists preventing the National Front from marching through Lewisham in south London - an area of high 'black' concentration (Bambery 1992). When the National Front polled 119,000 votes in the 1977 Greater London Local Council elections and threatened to become the third party in British politics, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was established to counter this threat through the use of extra-parliamentary action (Bambery 1992; Husbands 1983). Primary evidence suggests that parts of the organised labour movement played an important role in the ANL's activities providing financial aid and encouraging trade union branches and trades councils to affiliate and participate in its local activities (see for example the annual reports of the Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA) (1980: 13; 1981: 11); Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) (1983: 26; 1984: 54); and the National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO) (1981: 15)).

Throughout the late 1970s, there was a growing recognition amongst key elements of organised labour that racism served only to weaken the trade union movement and that it had to be actively combatted. Several major trade unions including the General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB), the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU), the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the National Association of Teachers in Higher and Further Education (NATHFE), NALGO and the CPSA issued positive statements against racism and set up bodies to monitor the implementation of equal opportunity policies. Similarly, a resolution passed at the 1977 TUC annual conference called upon the General Council to conduct a campaign against racists in trade unions. This led to the publication of a General Council statement on racism in

1978, and, in 1979, the TUC sent a circular to all affiliated unions that had not adopted policies on tackling racists in their unions to do so (Labour Research Department 1983: 182-183).

However, events were unfolding even during the course of the Grunwick dispute that would ensure that this kind of mass demonstration of ‘inter-racial’ working class solidarity would not manifest itself again during this particular epoch. The British economy had been characterised by increasing inflation and unemployment since the mid-1970s (Marsh 1992). Under growing pressure from international capital to curb rising wage demands, the recently-elected Labour government introduced a voluntary incomes policy in the form of a ‘Social Contract’ to curb the militant rank and file revolt which had brought it to power. Critical to the success of this policy was the support of left-wing trade union leaders like Jack Jones (TGWU) and Hugh Scanlon (AEU) who were asked to ‘sell’ this policy to their members or risk the fall of a Labour government (Marsh 1992). Although these leaders were initially successful in curbing the industrial unrest, the announcement of £1 billion worth of cuts in public expenditure in July 1976 against a backdrop of declining working class living standards led to a resurgence in militant strike activity. However, unlike the strike wave of 1968-74 which had brought activists like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon to higher elective office, the strike wave of 1977-79 saw these same trade union leaders less keen to support such action because of the intense pressure they found themselves under from the Labour Party (Marsh 1992). Consequently, the industrial unrest that ensued saw these trade union leaders lose considerable authority in the eyes of their membership.

By the time of the ‘Winter of Discontent’ in 1978-79, ‘the TUC could no longer deliver the support of its member unions and union leaders could no longer deliver the support of their members’ (Marsh 1992: 52). It was the political vacuum that arose because of organised labour’s disillusionment with these left-wing trade union leaders and more broadly the machinations of the Labour Party in office that enabled the Conservative Party to come to power in May 1979.

Conclusions

According to black radical authors such as Sivanandan (1976: 350; 1977: 359; 1982: 3-54); Gilroy (1982: 278; 1987: 246) and organisations like the Race Today Collective (1983) who developed their analysis of racist action in trade unions from events that unfolded during this period between 1945 and 1979, the instigation of racist exclusionary practices by trade unionists was motivated by the economic benefits they accrued. Arising from this critique, these writers drew two important conclusions regarding anti-racist political practice. First, the organised ‘white’ working class could no longer be viewed as an agency capable of engaging in ‘inter-racial’ class action to combat racism (Gilroy 1987: 246). Second, an alternative agency in the form of the ‘black’ working class (encompassing both ‘South Asians’ and ‘Caribbeans’) was identified as being able to carry out this task more effectively. Indeed, Gilroy (1987) went so far as to contend that such ‘black’ self-organisation constituted the antithesis of

class-based politics, leading him to re-conceptualise such collective action as a new social movement.

By re-visiting the events that took place during this period, this chapter questions the conclusions drawn by black radical theorists regarding the origins of trade union racism, the significance of 'black' self-organisation and the likelihood of 'inter-racial' action. It was demonstrated that the black radical claim of the racist actions of trade unionists being motivated by the economic benefits they accrued from doing so needs to be qualified. Specifically, it was largely during periods where a weak class identity (i.e. a sectionalist trade union consciousness) prevailed such as in the 1950s and 1960s that trade unionists employed racism and exclusionary practices to restrict the employment of 'black' labour to defend their economic position. Such action was not motivated by a recognition that it would result in economic gains at the expense of other groups of workers (although marginal economic gain was sometimes a by-product of such action) but rather marked an attempt to protect what little they had in a capitalist social formation that could never fully guarantee their economic security. However, in periods characterised by an intense class struggle and increasing strike action such as the 1970s, the formation of a strong class identity (i.e. a corporate trade union consciousness) helped to undermine the prevalence of racism in trade unions and led to the development of an 'inter-racial' class solidarity where the advancement of sectional member interests were increasingly perceived to coincide with the interests of the aggregate working class.

Critical to the formation of this 'inter-racial' class solidarity were 'black' workers engaged in independent anti-racist action and socialist activists who recognised that racism and fascism served to divide the working class; something trade unions could ill afford when trying to defend their economic position against mounting state and employer attacks. Hence, 'black' self-organisation was not a substitute for 'inter-racial' class action as black radical theorists claim (Sivanandan 1982; Gilroy 1982; 1987; Race Today Collective 1983) but its essential precursor.

Black radical writers are unable to grasp that the response of trade unions towards migrant labour and their English-born children is contingent on a wider set of social relations and the type of strategy trade unions adopt in defence of their members' interests. This response cannot be pre-determined or predicted in advance as black radical theorists do, but has to be concretely analysed in each historical epoch. By failing to do this, black radical theorists end up offering an ahistorical exposition of trade union racism which, when faced with evidence which directly contradicts their thesis, they end up ignoring (see for example Gilroy 1982; 1987) or negating its significance (see Sivanandan 1982; Ramdin 1987 on the Grunwick dispute).

It is only by adopting a conceptual framework that locates the study of trade union racism (and anti-racism) in the role played by trade unions in a capitalist social formation that one can go on to accurately identify and comprehend the dynamics of social change. The results of doing so, as this chapter has demonstrated, are that black radical theorists have been rather hasty in writing off the 'white' organised labour

movement. Instead, especially during the more acute phases of the class struggle, the 'white' working class remains an agency capable of overcoming the ideology of racism and acting in solidarity with 'black' workers, including outside of the workplace.

However, such a current of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity was short-lived. Growing disillusionment with the Labour Party and left-wing trade union leaders arising from their failure to arrest the decline in working class living standards enabled the Conservative Party to come to office in May 1979 committed to a programme of economic liberalisation and a drastic reduction in the power of the trade unions. Little is known about the relationship between organised labour and the 'black' worker during the 1980s and early 1990s and it is to this I now turn in the following chapter.

PART THREE

LABOUR AND RACISM: THE CONTEMPORARY RELATIONSHIP

7 ‘Racial formation’ in local state trade

unionism in the 1980s

The restructuring of the British social formation that began during Labour's tenure accelerated further during the first few years of the Conservative Party's term in office as a result of the economic policies they pursued. In particular, they rejected incomes policies and government intervention in the economy and placed increased emphasis on the need for strict monetarist measures to control the rate of inflation. This objective was achieved by the introduction of a major programme of public spending cuts and the pursuit of privatisation policies (Winchester and Bach 1995; Colling and Ferner 1995). However, these policies contributed to the recession of 1979-81 when unemployment doubled from 1.14 million or 4.7 per cent of civil employment in June 1979 to 2.3 million or 9.4 per cent of the labour force in June 1981 (Kessler and Bayliss 1995: 42). Manufacturing employment was particularly adversely affected with a quarter of all jobs being lost between 1979 and 1983 (Eldridge et al 1991: 32).

Another defining feature of Conservative public policy during this period was their intention to curb the power of the trade unions who they alleged were the primary agents of economic inefficiency in the British economy (Marsh 1992; Taylor 1994). In particular, the Thatcher administrations were committed to freeing up the economy from forces such as restrictive practices and job protection born out of union power and

which obstructed and distorted the operation of the market economy (Dickens and Hall 1995). This objective was achieved using a twin-pronged approach:

...one being the willingness to confront union power through macho-management holding out against strikes; the other...[through] the systematic removal of collective and individual employment rights and the impositions of restrictions on various forms of unionised political activity (Eldridge et al 1991: 86).

Between 1979 and 1986, large employers like British Leyland, British Steel, the Civil Service, the National Health Service and the National Coal Board defeated striking workers in these industries in long-drawn out disputes (Eldridge et al (1991: 88). These employers were ably supported by the Conservative government which introduced a major legislative programme that decisively shifted the balance of the class struggle between capital and labour towards the former. Dickens and Hall (1995: 283) argue that ‘in several key disputes during the 1980s, extensive use of the law by employers had a major and possibly decisive impact’ in defeating collective working class resistance (Taylor 1994; Marsh 1992). Some of the more important measures introduced included the withdrawal of immunity from particular types of industrial action. Hence, the 1980 Employment Act made picketing away from the picket’s own workplace unlawful whilst the 1990 Employment Act made industrial action by workers whose employers were not party to the dispute (i.e. secondary action) unlawful. The 1982, 1988 and 1990 Employment Acts limited the issues around which

industrial action could be lawfully organised whilst the 1982 and 1990 Employment Acts made unions liable for unlawful industrial action (Dickens and Hall 1995: 279-287).

The outcome of such an employer and state offensive, was the thorough undermining of rank and file confidence in collective action: whereas, the 1980-85 period saw 9.806 million days lost to strike action/ year involving 1,213 million workers, the 1986-90 period saw only 3,324 million days lost to strike action/ year involving 751,000 workers (cited in Edwards 1995: 439; Table 14.2). This downward trend continued into the 1990s so that by 1992, the number of days lost to strike action had declined to a post-war low of 528,000 involving just 148,000 workers. Politically, this atomisation of the English working class manifested itself in the support it gave to the ‘authoritarian populist’ agenda (Hall 1983) of the Conservative government which ensured it remained in power throughout the 1980s.

To accommodate themselves to this changed mood within the working class, trade union leaders shifted from a position of ‘militant reformism’ which they had adhered to since the early 1970s (Lyddon 1984) to one that promoted a ‘new realist’ agenda (TUC 1988) offering a ‘softer, more friendly image to employers and workers alike’ (Ackers et al 1996: 5; see also Marsh 1992: 116-17, 240-41) and characterised by ‘a growing acceptance of the realities of the changing environment in which unions had to operate’ (Kessler and Bayliss 1995: 191). The essential components of this new realism were support for ‘opportunistic mergers, overtures to employers, recruitment campaigns and

improved public images and individual services for workers' (Ackers et al 1996: 27). According to Kelly (1996: 77), this change in public policy was informed by these trade union leaders' belief that

...union survival and recovery turned on the willingness of unions and their members to behave 'moderately' and to offer concessions to the employer...Labour-management co-operation, or 'social partnership' was to be the order of the day, and the old 'adversarial' industrial relations was castigated as destructive and irrelevant in the current era of intensified world competition.

Anti-racist action in an era of neo-liberalism and weak class identity

Apart from a few exceptions (see Virdee and Grint 1994; Wrench and Virdee 1996), there has been little in the way of critical academic work looking at racist and anti-racist action in trade unions during this period of retreat. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify and discern some broad developments. First, whilst the mass 'inter-racial' rank and file solidarity that took place at Grunwick was no longer in evidence (although for an exception see Miller 1996 and his description of 'inter-racial' action by Islington NALGO workers against racism in Islington Council), the 1980s, did witness continuing 'white' union activist support for 'black' workers on strike, most notably in the case of the Burnsall workers in the West Midlands (see Buyum 1993; Wrench and

Virdee 1996) and the Hillingdon hospital workers in west London (Lalkar 1997). Secondly, most large trade unions and the TUC introduced a comprehensive set of measures to promote anti-racism and equal opportunities that included the negotiation of equal opportunity policy agreements with employers (Mason 1994; Labour Research Department 1990; 1993); policy agreements with the union as an employer (Labour Research Department 1993); participation in anti-racist initiatives outside of the workplace, especially anti-deportation campaigns (McIlroy and Ball 1982; Labour Research Department 1993); and, measures to increase 'black' worker participation and representation in trade unions (see TUC 1991; Virdee 1992; Virdee and Grint 1994).

Whilst anti-racist action by trade union activists continued into the 1980s despite a decline in the prevalence of a strong class identity (i.e. a corporate trade union consciousness), I am by no means suggesting that racist sentiment did not re-emerge within some trade unions. Bill Morris, who became general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) in April 1992, is the most senior 'black' union official at the time of writing. However, Morris achieved this position in the face of considerable racism from within his own union and an evident lack of enthusiasm from some other union leaders, including Eric Hammond (leader of the EETPU), who said it was 'not the best thing for the country or the TGWU' (Observer, 9 June 1991 cited in Virdee and Grint 1994: 206). More recently, the TGWU accused a smaller trade union, the United Road Transport Union, of colluding with the employer, Ford of Dagenham.

to maintain recruitment practices that effectively excluded ‘black’ workers from working as the company’s elite truck drivers (CARF 1997).

In the light of these developments during the 1980s, this chapter looks at three questions. First, it considers what particular strategies were employed to combat racism and exclusionary practices in trade unions?; second, what were the specific constellation of social forces and events that shaped the formation of these strategies?; third, was there any opposition to such anti-racist initiatives and what was its social basis?; and, fourth, to what extent were the anti-racist social forces able to achieve what they had set out to do?

Clearly, these questions cannot be answered with reference to the whole of the trade union movement in the 1980s. Therefore, I propose to concentrate my investigation on a trade union that has become increasingly important in the contemporary social formation: the National and Local Government Officers’ Association (NALGO). The factors determining the selection of NALGO were two-fold. First, as I demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 4, the changing nature of work in the contemporary social formation led to the growth of some trade unions and the decline of others. Whilst manufacturing trade unions like the TGWU and GMWU lost large numbers of members as a result of the decline in manual forms of employment, unions like NALGO, by resisting such trends, became increasingly important in terms of size vis-a-vis the rest of the trade union movement in England (Taylor 1994; McIlroy 1995). Second, as I also indicated in Chapters 2 and 4, the long-term effects of the urban unrest of the early 1980s were

most acutely felt in local government, where local state employment was opened up to 'black' workers for the first time (Ouseley 1990). Since NALGO was the main union responsible for organising non-manual workers in local government, the 1980s saw a rapid increase of 'black' members joining the union. Yet, despite these important developments, little consideration has been given to the ways in which the relationship between NALGO and 'black' workers developed (for an exception see Virdee and Grint 1994).

Local state trade unionism: NALGO

The origins of NALGO lie in an organisation established in 1896 by Herbert Blain called the Liverpool Officers Guild. Through time, this organisation came to be an efficiently-run Friendly Society for municipal officers. However, when Blain moved to London, he found that the equivalent organisation was moribund and so established a national organisation for municipal officers, which, in 1905, became the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO)¹ (Maksymiv et al 1990: 193). In its early days, NALGO considered itself to be a professional staff association that had little in common with manual trade unionism. As Levi Hill, its first general secretary claimed in 1911: 'anything savouring of trade unionism is nausea to the local government officer and his association' (Maksymiv et al 1990: 193). It was not until

¹ It was only later that the union became known by its present name of the National and Local Government Officers' Association.

1920 and the beginning of the expansion of non-manual work in local government that NALGO became a certified trade union (Maksymiv et al 1990: 194).

The inter-war years saw a steady expansion in non-manual work, especially in local government (Lockwood 1989: 184; Hyman and Price 1983: 3-46) that was reflected in a corresponding increase in NALGO membership. From having only 8,000 members when it was established in 1905, NALGO's membership increased to 43,000 by 1928 and 171,000 in 1948 (Maksymiv et al 1990: 194). However, it was during the post-war era of capitalist re-structuring and a marked acceleration in the expansion of non-manual work in general (Fryer 1989; Hyman and Price 1983), and, in local government in particular (Fairbrother 1989), that NALGO membership increased dramatically, doubling from 171,000 in 1948 to 367,000 in 1968, and, then, almost doubling again to 709,000 in 1978 in half the time period (Maksymiv et al 1990: 194).

Even during the 1980s and Conservative attempts to 'roll back the state' through rationalisation and privatisation (see Ackers et al 1996), NALGO managed to retain its membership whilst other non-manual unions like the CPSA and the NUCPS, but particularly manual unions like the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), experienced dramatic losses (Fairbrother 1989: 191). By 1982, NALGO membership had increased to 784,297 although by 1987 it had declined slightly to 758,780 members, comprising 384,702 men and 374,078 women (Maksymiv et al 1990: 192).

Accompanying this expansion of non-manual work in the state sector in the twentieth century was its growing routinisation and de-skilling (Crompton and Jones 1984: see also the collection of papers in Hyman and Price 1983). As Fairbrother (1989: 188) observes:

...state institutions have been restructured so as to compose a state labour process. State workers have come to occupy class positions as wage labourers subject to control and exploitation. This has resulted in a re-composition of non-manual areas of state work with the lower grades of administrative, clerical and semi-professional workers comprising a 'new state proletariat'.

He goes on to add that:

...state management has been redefined in more precise ways than in the past, with a re-affirmation of supervision and control...These developments have had important implications for the consciousness of state workers, in particular the possibility that the structural redefinition of the managerial and 'proletarian' boundary will be accompanied by the development of a managerial and 'proletarian' consciousness respectively (Fairbrother 1989: 188).

Fairbrother's (1989) analysis is borne out when one considers it was amidst the post-war expansion of local state employment and its growing routinisation that NALGO finally adopted a strike clause in its constitution in 1961 (Maksymiv et al 1990: 194) and that it was during the strike wave of 1968-74 that NALGO, in 1970, engaged in its first official strike involving 18 members of the Leeds branch in a dispute over the application of a local bonus and incentive scheme (Maksymiv et al 1990: 194). By the early 1970s, it was public sector unions, including NALGO, that came to play a leading part in collective workplace resistance (see Maksymiv et al 1990: 201). As Fairbrother (1989: 203) observes:

In the 1970s, the pattern of British trade unionism shifted in a dramatic and fundamental way. It was during this period that state sector unions emerged as unions prepared and, at times, able to challenge government policy and practice...During this period, the majority of national union campaigns and struggles involved state workers, located in local and central-government areas of employment...For many state workers, particularly in local and central government, this has meant involvement in union collective action for the first time in their employment lives.

With non-industrial civil servants involved in strike action in 1973 and 1979 and non-manual local government workers striking in 1974 and 1978/79 (Fairbrother 1989), Fairbrother (1989: 203) goes so far as to claim that:

The patterns of union militancy in the state sector have changed, so that in the 1970s and into the 1980s, it was more likely that local and central government workers were involved in principal stoppages (that is, disputes of 50,000 strike days or more) than were public corporation and statutory authority workers...

Anti-racist action and the local state proletariat

Although the first motion calling for action to combat racism was passed at the 1968 NALGO annual conference (NBMCC no date: 6) it was amidst the growing militancy of the 1970s, that the indications of organised opposition to racism first emerged. At the 1974 annual conference, a motion was passed which called:

... attention to the need for both its members and the employers to use their considerable influence to assist in defeating racialism in this country by making manifest their disgust and by using their statutory powers, where applicable, against offending establishments (cited in NALGO 1975: 32; see also NALGO 1984b: 28).

In fact, the 1970s saw the emergence of two anti-racist currents in NALGO. First, there were those socialist activists whose primary motivation for combatting racism was

their belief that it divided the working class and thereby weakened the class solidarity that was needed to resist state and employer attacks. This strand of NALGO activist opinion was particularly concerned about the growing electoral support of the National Front (see Husbands 1983) and demanded action to combat far-right activity in the union and in the community (see NALGO 1979: 36). A motion collectively put by Tower Hamlets, Hammersmith and Lambeth branches - all areas of high 'black' settlement - to the 1978 Annual Conference called for the expulsion of those members of NALGO who were also members of far-right organisations (Public Service July/August 1978: 9). The mover, Alan Tobias (Tower Hamlets branch) made symbolic reference to Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists' march in east London in 1936 (see Chapter 5 of this study; Piratin 1978) and warned that membership of such organisations represented 'the very antithesis of the belief of trade unionists in the brotherhood of workers' and asked the conference:

How can we accept in our trade union members of groups whose whole political perspective is based on second-class citizenship of certain of our brothers? (Public Service July/August 1978: 9).

Another delegate contended that the far-right represented a threat not only to 'blacks', but gays, Jews and all trade unionists: 'If they get to power, they will destroy trade unions as we know them' (cited in Public Service, July/August 1978: 9). Despite a lengthy debate, the motion was defeated. However, another motion urging 'employing authorities to deny the use of their premises to the National Front and British National

Party' and support for demonstrations against racism was passed (NALGO 1979; Public Service July/August 1978: 9).

The second of these anti-racist currents emerged in 1975 in the wake of the publication of the White Paper '*Racial Discrimination*' (the forerunner of the 1976 Race Relations Act) which encouraged local authorities to undertake positive action measures to promote equality of opportunity in employment. At the 1976 Annual Conference, a National Executive Council motion was carried

...recognising the need to promote equal opportunities policies for racial and other minorities [and accepting] that this may require the keeping of separate ethnic records and the provision of information on which to base policies for equal treatment (Public Service July/August 1976: 6).

The motion rescinded the 1971 conference decision which had prevented the collection of records and advised branches to co-operate in schemes brought forward by employing authorities (Public Service July/ August 1976). However, evidence submitted in 1980 by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities - the body organising all the metropolitan counties, metropolitan districts, the London boroughs and the City of London, the Greater London Council (GLC) and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) - conceded that few local authorities had actually introduced such anti-racist programmes (Solomos 1993). Particularly disturbing was the finding that most of these local authorities had failed to open up non-manual employment to 'black'

workers to any marked extent. Even in areas of high 'black' concentration such as Greater London, 'black' workers remained substantially under-represented in local government employment. In Lambeth only four per cent of the workforce were of 'ethnic minority' origin during the late 1970s and 'black' employment in the GLC prior to 1981 was 'minimal' (Mayet 1986: 58). Even in Hackney, one of the highest areas of 'black' concentration, only eleven per cent of the workforce were of 'ethnic minority' origin (Ouseley 1990: 151, Table 8.1). However, the political fall-out from the urban unrest during the early 1980s was to dramatically alter this state of affairs.

The opening up of local state employment to 'black' workers

Against the backdrop of economic decline and the exacerbation of more specific problems such as the deterioration in the relationship between the police and inner-city youth, urban unrest broke out in many English conurbations during the early 1980s (Benyon 1984; Solomos 1988). Although the research evidence suggests that the participants of the unrest comprised both 'black' and 'white' youths (see Benyon 1984; Gilroy 1987; Solomos 1988), two mutually antagonistic sets of social forces ensured that racism or more precisely, the social construction of 'race', came to dominate public policy debate about the main causes of the unrest.

On the one hand, the anti-racist movement insisted that the root causes of the unrest lay in the systematic destruction of the lives of 'black' communities through the operation

of racism and exclusionary practices and state (mainly police) harassment, which had served to create a 'racially-defined' sub-proletariat (see Sivanandan 1990). On the other hand, the tabloid press forcefully denied that the unrest was the result of racism and instead attempted to criminalise the unrest by claiming it was the product of a 'black' criminal underbelly within society (see Solomos 1988; Gilroy 1987). In both sets of analyses, far less attention was paid to explaining the plight of 'white' working class youth who had also been active participants of the unrest (Benyon 1984).

It was amidst this highly-charged political atmosphere that the results of the Scarman Inquiry into the urban unrest were published in November 1981 (Scarman 1981). The report advanced a series of recommendations including adopting a more effective co-ordinated approach to tackling the problem of the inner cities; adopting a policy of positive action to combat 'racial' discrimination against 'non-white' social groups; reforming the police force and introducing new methods of policing (Taylor 1984: 29). However, apart from offering qualified support to the findings contained in the Scarman Report (see Raison 1984: 244-257), the right-wing Conservative administration proved highly averse to introducing even the minor reforms that were necessary to tackle racism and exclusionary practices effectively.

At this juncture, the trade unions and the Labour Party could have colluded with employers to exclude 'black' workers from the remaining areas of employment growth and stability (such as the state and service sector) within the British social formation. However, they did not: the political relations in 1980s England were rather different

from those during the 1950s and 1960s when the prevalence of a weak class identity (i.e. a sectionalist trade union consciousness) had greatly hindered the formation of an indigenous current of 'white' anti-racism (see Chapter 6 of this study). Although 'white' rank and file militancy had subsided since the 1970s, union activists that had led the industrial unrest remained in positions of leadership so that by the early 1980s, they were to some extent, to the left of their membership over a range of important issues, including the need to combat racism (Virdee and Grint 1994).

An anti-racist coalition comprising these 'white' trade union activists, 'black' activists committed to a 'racial formation' project and left-wing activists in the Labour Party disillusioned by the Party's term in office in the 1970s ensured that the recommendations of the Scarman Report were forced on to the local state public policy agenda, especially in local councils in the Greater London area where nearly half the 'black' population resided (Owen 1992). As Ouseley claims:

... the unrest does seem to have forced local authorities to respond to the demands of their local black communities for action on racial discrimination in employment, service delivery and housing (cited in Solomos 1993: 104).

According to Solomos (1993: 110), these local authorities began to develop policies to combat 'racial discrimination' in employment. Amongst the most important measures introduced were establishing targets to increase the number of 'black' staff employed by local councils; making efforts to remove discriminatory barriers to full equality of

opportunity by rethinking job qualification requirements; placing job advertisements in the 'ethnic minority' press; attempting to facilitate and encourage 'minority' participation in education and the labour force by means of additional education and training; using section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act to create new posts (Solomos 1993: 110). Anecdotal information suggests that these policies were critical in opening up non-manual local state employment to 'black' workers to an extent that had not been witnessed before (Ouseley 1990; Mayet 1986; Solomos 1993). Ouseley (1990: 139) describes how prior to the urban unrest and the Labour administration taking control in 1981, the GLC had

...made no positive impact whatsoever on black people's lives...As a large employer in London it had very few black people on the payroll...the vast majority of whom were in low grade and low status occupations.

Yet in five years of the radical Labour-run GLC, it 'more than trebled the number of black staff, many of whom obtained middle-ranking positions and raised consciousness about racism' (Ouseley 1990: 141). The GLC acted as a catalyst in encouraging other local authorities to launch similar anti-racist programmes. In Lambeth, 'black' employment increased from four per cent in the late 1970s to nearly 20 per cent in 1986 (Mayet 1986: 58) while in Hackney, it rose from twelve per cent in 1981 to 27 per cent in 1986 and 35 per cent in 1988 (Ouseley 1990: 151, Table 8.1). It is particularly important to bear in mind that this action was carried out in the face of severe structural constraints including growing attempts by central government to curb

local government power as part of their broader programme of reducing public spending. Ouseley (1990) claims that the imposition of cash limits, 'rate-capping', new legislation and privatisation did eventually succeed in curbing the effective implementation of these 'race equality' programmes:

...local government has become a moving target with massive upheaval and changes which make restructuring race equality programmes for maximum effectiveness and impact an insignificant issue on the rapidly changing political landscape (Ouseley (1990: 136).

Nonetheless, whilst such action by central government may have put a brake on 'race equality' programmes by the late 1980s, it remains the case that non-manual employment in local government was opened up to 'black' workers, albeit mainly in the lower echelons (Ouseley 1990).

'Don't discuss blacks behind our backs': the struggle for 'black' self-organisation in NALGO

The urban unrest and the entry of 'black' workers into local state employment and subsequently NALGO transformed the debate in the union about how best to combat racism. When NALGO began to undertake anti-racist work in the 1970s, the responsibility for co-ordinating this work had resided with the Economic Committee -

a sub-committee of the NEC. However, in the immediate aftermath of the urban unrest, union activists, especially those from where the unrest had actually taken place, began to challenge these structural arrangements, contending that more appropriate structures, with greater 'black' involvement, were required if the problem was to be combatted effectively. Two months after the Brixton riots in April 1981, Lambeth NALGO, the branch which encompassed the area of Brixton, put forward a motion to the annual conference calling for the establishment of a national 'race equality' committee with responsibility to not only promote 'equality of employment in NALGO's services for people from racial minorities'; but also look into 'the promotion of membership and activity within NALGO by workers from racial minorities' (Lambeth NALGO 1981: 19; see also NALGO 1982: 22). With the impact of the urban unrest not completely fed through in terms of increased 'black' employment and involvement in NALGO, the NEC were able to successfully call for the Lambeth motion to be rejected contending that a 'race equality committee would be an inappropriate vehicle' and that responsibility for this work should continue to rest with the Economic Committee (NALGO 1982: 22). Importantly however, the NEC did acknowledge that:

...recognising the strong feeling which exists within the union your Council is currently giving further consideration to the best means of pursuing NALGO's aims in this field (NALGO 1982: 22).

A motion calling for the establishment of a national 'race equality' committee was also put forward at the 1982 annual conference. On this occasion, the motion was proposed

by Ealing NALGO branch, which encompassed the area of Southall where anti-racist riots had taken place during the previous summer of 1981 (Southall Monitoring Group 1981). Although there were still few 'black' delegates at the conference, about 30-40 'black' NALGO observers attended the debate (Mayet 1986). The NEC responded to the Ealing motion by first calling for amendments and then seeking reference from conference revealing that

...it had recently resolved to establish a race equality working party to include members of minority ethnic groups whose brief is broadly to research, monitor and make recommendations on the issues of racism and racial discrimination (NALGO 1983: 31).

Since representation on this Race Equality Working Party (REWP) would be determined by district committees who were overwhelmingly comprised of 'white' activists, 'black' NALGO activists argued its establishment represented an attempt by the NEC to determine a strategy to combat racism without due consultation with its 'black' membership. When a card vote on this proposal, demanded by over 80 delegates was ignored by the chair, the 'black' observers 'angrily staged a protest, and entered the main hall. The chair closed the session, after referring contemptuously to 'The invasion'' (cited in NBMCC no date: 6). The negative perception formed of the debate by the 'black' NALGO observers marked it out as a decisive turning point in the relationship between the NEC and the burgeoning 'black' activist membership. Significantly, it led many of them to conclude that the most effective strategy to combat

racism would be one that was based on independent 'black' activity. As a document of the black members' groups retrospectively contended:

...this was 1982. The summer before had been the long hot one of the uprisings.

Things would never be quite the same for NALGO again...Black action had arrived (NBMCC no date: 6).

Support for independent 'black' action was further strengthened with the growing numbers of 'black' workers that entered local state employment in the early 1980s (Ouseley 1990; see also Jones 1993; Modood 1997a). This enabled 'black' activists to mount a sustained campaign of opposition to the NEC-sponsored REWP so that 'it was quickly boycotted by black members - who saw its composition of white faces and a handful of selected blacks as bantu-stan' (NBMCC no date: 6-7). The REWP attempted to accommodate itself to such criticism by agreeing to organise a major consultative conference in early 1983 to gather the views of 'grassroots black members' whilst poster campaigns, branch circulars and advertisements in the union journal, *Public Service* (e.g. November 1982: 16) publicised the work of the REWP and invited 'black' members to attend the conference. However, the controversial circumstances under which the REWP was established continued to blight its work. From the outset, the Metropolitan District Council (encompassing the Greater London NALGO branches that had significant levels of 'black' activism), declined to participate in the REWP's deliberations and refused to nominate members. Instead,

‘black’ activists picketed the consultative conference organised by the REWP in February 1983 which successfully led to its abandonment (NBMCC no date).

In place of the REWP, these ‘black’ activists set about establishing an alternative organisational vehicle, one which they contended would be more representative of the views of the rank and file ‘black’ NALGO membership. The first ever National Black Members’ Conference was held in Haringey, London in May 1983. It included delegates from all over the country and agreed a motion on ‘affirmative action’ which called for the disbanding of what it termed the ‘NEC-initiated race equality working party...because of the lack of any meaningful consultation with NALGO black and minority ethnic groups prior to this body’s establishment’; the convening of a conference of all ‘black’ and ‘minority ethnic’ groups to determine the criteria for the establishment of a national NALGO committee on ‘race’, which will co-ordinate and advance union policy on all matters concerning the struggle against racism and the structural and procedural changes necessary to accommodate this committee with the principle of substantive democracy for all ‘black’ and ‘minority ethnic’ members. It was argued that such a conference be planned in consultation with those local ‘black’ and ‘minority ethnic’ committees of NALGO branches already functioning (Public Service 1983: mid-March: 13). It also put forward the first formal proposal for ‘black’ self-organisation in the form of ‘encouraging the setting up of black and/or minority ethnic committees at branch and district level’ (Mayet 1986: Appendix E; NBMCC no date: 7).

This motion was put to the 1983 annual conference by the Metropolitan District where it was debated amidst a highly-charged atmosphere. According to the 'black' activists, the NEC attempted to use 'under-hand' methods to ensure the motion's downfall:

...the NEC's initial response seems to have been to deny black observers entry, under the pre-text that there was insufficient seating room. Black members responded by swiftly refurbishing a banner that said 'DON'T DISCUSS BLACKS BEHIND OUR BACKS' (cited in NBMCC no date: 9).

When the debate actually got under way, Vernon Harris (Haringey) re-iterated the main reason for their opposition to the REWP:

We are asking for the NEC-initiated Race Equality Working Party to be disbanded because of the lack of any meaningful consultation with NALGO black and minority ethnic groups, prior to this body's establishment...can I say that we black NALGO members from all over the country, from Edinburgh, Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, all the way down to London...we are saying to the NEC, think again. The REWP does not represent us.. We are telling you and we're giving the advice that only we have the right in participation with yourselves to decide what is best for us (cited in Public Service July/August 1983: 5).

The annual conference, however, rejected the motion supported by 'black' activists calling for the REWP to be disbanded and instead granted it a further year to submit its report (NALGO 1984a: 75). Significantly, however, the vote was only lost by 439,163 votes against and 219,682 for, indicating that there was a significant body of activist opinion within NALGO which supported the right of 'black' self-organisation (Mayet 1986).

By 1984, two distinct and antagonistic currents of opinion had formed within the union over how it ought to combat racism. The first, as we have seen, comprised those 'black' activists that had entered local state employment in the immediate aftermath of the urban unrest. This layer of opinion demanded that those who were the object of racism should have a pre-eminent right to determine the type of strategy required to combat it. Karen Chouhan, secretary of the National Black Members' Co-ordinating Committee (NBMCC), whilst allaying the fears of separatism, emphasised the importance of self-organisation as representing the most effective means to combat racism both in the union and outside:

As black trade unionists we must force the union to recognise the vital role it must play in fighting against exploitation and for equal rights. The 1980s, however, have been witness to an increased urgency for consolidation and action on equality. The black perspective is vital in the analysis, the policies and action of NALGO, and is the only thing which can hope to change the structures and services of the union so that black people are no longer an itch

on someone's back but the very spine for solidarity, the first principle of trade unionism...It is not self-organisation for the sake of being separate. It is to ensure exactly the opposite that black issues and rights are addressed by the trade unions to which we belong in a way acceptable to black members. As black trade unionists we believe in the principles of solidarity and support but these can never happen if the union works only for some (First Official National Black Members Conference 1986: 6).

In this schema, the role of 'whites', including NEC officials, was negated to merely ratifying and supporting unconditionally the anti-racist policies and tactics devised by 'black' activists. The origins of this 'black' 'racial formation' project did not lie in a desire for separatism but rather a belief (reinforced by the manner in which the decisions were made at the 1981 and 1982 NALGO annual conferences) that the response to combatting racism would be quicker and more effective than if 'white' activists, including the NEC were involved. This was because the NEC was a body that derived its authority and power from articulating the wishes of its membership, at least as articulated by workplace representatives (see Hyman 1972; Beynon 1984; Kelly 1988). Under circumstances which had witnessed a decline in prevalence of a strong class identity (i.e. a corporate trade union consciousness), many 'black' activists believed that 'white' rank and file workers would be unwilling to engage in the 'inter-racial' class action that was necessary to combat racism. Despite being personally committed to challenging racism, the fear of losing control over these 'white' members

would force the NEC to limit the pace of change at which anti-racist measures were introduced.

The second current of opinion emerged in 1984 when, after almost two years of deliberations, the REWP produced a white paper containing a set of proposals to tackle racism. There is little doubt that under the intense pressure exerted by the black members' groups, the REWP had gone some way in accommodating their demands. It acknowledged that whilst the union had organised and passed resolutions against racism, it had 'always lacked a coherent strategy to mount an effective and continuing campaign against racism' (NALGO 1984b: 3). Moreover, it recognised that to ensure the full involvement of 'ethnic minority' members in the union and tackle under-representation would 'require major changes in the organisation and structure of the union at every level' (NALGO 1984b: 13). Nonetheless, the REWP's recommendations were based on a different set of ideological considerations to those of the 'black' members' groups. They

...assumed that those most closely affected by oppression and discrimination should take the lead in determining the counter-strategy. But because unity is strength and most NALGO members are white, the Working Party believes that any organisation and structure devised by the union should ensure all members are involved and white members are not 'let off the hook' (NALGO 1984b: 4).

Hence, whilst recognising the right of 'black' workers to take the initiative in determining a strategy to counter racism, this strategy had to convince 'white' workers of the need to combat racism and seek to involve them in these activities. As has already been made clear, these principles reflected the ambiguous position that NALGO's leadership, especially the NEC, occupied in social relations. As an elected body that derived its power and authority from its membership, the NEC saw its primary aim as being to articulate and represent the majority views of its membership. Consequently, it was forced to tread a fine line between, on the one hand, their personal commitment to challenging racism, especially under pressure from its 'black' membership, whilst on the other hand, recognising the need to convince the majority of its 'white' activist rank and file membership of the need to support such action or risk a racist backlash and a resultant loss of their authority.

Arising from these considerations, the REWP motion recommended the establishment of branch 'race equality' committees to oversee the negotiation of equal opportunities policies and make recommendations for changes in the internal arrangements of trade union branches. It was clearly stated that these committees be 'multi-ethnic' in character to ensure that 'white' workers were involved in activities against racism:

All races should be involved in this work and this should be reflected in the composition of the committees. It is important that these bodies should not only win the confidence of ethnic minority members, but also engage the full support of the white majority within the branches (NALGO 1984b: 15).

This recommendation amounted to a downgrading of the role to be played by the black members' groups in union policy formation to that of an advisory group. The REWP:

...did not see black members' groups and race equality committees as alternatives but as complementary. The former will evolve to meet the needs perceived by black members themselves. Their functions may include ensuring for black members a voice in the union, enabling ethnic minority members to share their experience; acting as a pressure group, to challenge the assumptions of white members; and perhaps as an initial filter for allegations of discrimination. The latter is essential to involve the whole branch in the achievement of equality (NALGO 1984b: 15).

At the district level, there was a recognition that it was difficult to prescribe recommendations due to the uneven concentration of minorities in the country and therefore consideration needed to be given to direct representation of black members' groups on district councils (NALGO 1984b: 15). At a national level, it was recommended that a permanent Race Equality Committee (REC) should be established with equal status to the National Equal Opportunities Committee. According to the REWP (NALGO 1984b: 15):

Its brief would be to monitor the position of ethnic minority workers in NALGO and NALGO services; to represent their interests within the union and

initiate research, campaigns, educational and other activities on their behalf; act as a pressure group and as advisors to the NEC...and help to ensure that NALGO makes a real impact when race issues are discussed both inside and outside the union.

Until these changes began to take effect, the REWP suggested that consideration should be given to co-opt the chairperson of the Race Equality Committee to the National Executive Council (NEC) to ensure a voice at the highest level of the union (NALGO 1984b: 16).

However, the black members' groups criticised the REWP motion in highly forceful terms accusing it of being 'tokenist, toothless and [a] watered down version of their demands, designed to appease the lowest common denominator of the white membership' (cited in Mayet 1986: 26). Instead, they re-submitted their affirmative action motion to the 1984 annual conference. The motion, jointly moved by the Metropolitan District Council and the Tower Hamlets Branch (1984) called for NALGO to encourage:

...the setting up of black and/or minority ethnic committees at branch and district, with the former to have a guaranteed speaking and voting access to the executive committee through co-options and the latter full-district sub-committee status.

The motion went on to demand that the NEC:

...convene a conference of all black and minority ethnic members to determine the criteria for the establishment of a national NALGO committee on race, which will co-ordinate and advance union policy on all matters concerning the struggle against racism... Such a conference to be planned in consultation with those black and minority ethnic local committees of NALGO branches already functioning (Metropolitan District Council and the Tower Hamlets Branch 1984).

After a bitter debate, the REWP white paper was endorsed by the annual conference by 375,820 votes for to 249,566 against, while the black members' group motion was defeated by 245,711 votes for to 388,448 votes against (Mayet 1986). However, the result failed to weaken the resolve of activists within the black members' groups who issued a statement immediately after the conference re-affirming their commitment to securing 'black' self-organisation in NALGO:

We are determined to continue to organise ourselves as black members in our localities, regionally and nationally. We intend to form a National Black Caucus and a strong, grass-roots based movement to build the struggle against racism in our workplaces and in the union, and we intend to do so on our terms, and only on the basis of genuine mutual respect from those who support our struggle (NBMCC no date: 8).

Despite the 1984 annual conference endorsing the creation of 'multi-ethnic' 'race equality' committees and reducing 'black' self-organised groups to the role of advisory committees, developments in many Greater London NALGO branches were moving increasingly in favour of the position being articulated by the black members' groups. Growing numbers of black members' groups were established in 1984 and 1985 'fuelled considerably by the 1981 uprisings and the municipal 'anti-racism' of the post-Scarman era' (NBMCC no date: 7). Significantly, in most of the branches where these black members' groups were established, local trade union officials disregarded official union policy and recognised the black members' groups as the legitimate voice of the rank and file 'black' worker. Hence, by 1985, and despite a conference decision to the contrary, 'black' self-organisation had become the reality in NALGO in most areas where 'black' workers constituted a significant proportion of the local NALGO membership (NBMCC no date; Mayet 1986).

Formal ratification of union support for the principle of 'black' self-organisation took place at the 1985 annual conference when it passed two motions that committed the NEC to developing and promoting a positive action programme for the black members' groups and to facilitating and supporting the development of black members groups at all levels of the union (NALGO 1986: 43). Hence, only a year after rejecting such a proposal, the NEC were forced to concede the right of black members' groups to determine union strategy and tactics on how best to combat racism, with the role of

‘whites’, including those on the NEC, negated to that of providing unconditional support.

In order to determine the structural and organisational arrangements necessary to translate ‘black’ self-organisation into practice, the NEC established a Positive Action Working Party (PAWP) which drew on representation from the self-organised groups. Further confirmation of union recognition for ‘black’ self-organisation followed when the NEC agreed to fund the next national black members conference with each NALGO branch able to send up to six delegates to the conference of whom half were expected to be women (see NALGO 1986: 77-78; Public Service May 1986: 9). For ‘black’ members the sanctioning of the conference represented a clear victory for the pressure they had brought to bear on the union hierarchy. The NBMCC stressed in the union journal that they hoped the conference would enable ‘black’ members to voice their demands

...which NALGO must accede to, if it is serious about joining us in our fight to wipe out racism at all levels within its own structures and outside. These changes are long over-due (cited in Public Service May 1986: 9).

The first officially sanctioned National Black Members’ Conference was held in Leeds in May 1986 with over ‘400 delegates and observers from all parts of the country, representing all NALGO services’ in attendance (NALGO 1987a: 79).

The ‘white’ rank and file backlash and the NEC re-asserts control

Formal recognition of the principle of ‘black’ self-organisation and the funding of the national black members’ conference, however, activated the sort of ‘white’ rank and file opposition the NEC had so feared. Anne Selby from Aylesbury argued that (Public Service June 1986: 6):

To me it is appalling that any people’s organisation should have a separate section exclusive to those of a certain skin colour. Surely it is time we recognised that all people have the same needs and to sectionalise them according to skin colour merely weakens the power to influence national decisions.

Additionally, a Mrs. R. Tallant from London explained that (Public Service June 1986: 6)

A conference restricted to black members sounds to me like the most blatant racism and apartheid. Whatever would your black members say if we insisted on having a conference restricted only to whites? Whatever they said would be well justified. The best way of combatting racism is to treat everyone alike and make no distinctions whatever based on a person’s skin colour. And that will have to go for everyone.

These letters encapsulated a view strongly held by many rank and file ‘white’ members that the union was in some way affording privileged treatment to a section of its membership that was unwarranted. These ‘white’ trade unionists held strongly to the view that ‘everybody ought to be treated the same’ and where there was little space to acknowledge the existence of racism, its ability to negatively structure the lives of ‘black’ workers or the need for the union to challenge it. The growing activity of ‘black’ activists had forced the NEC and the annual conference to concede the demand for ‘black’ self-organisation against its ‘better judgement’. Now, the realisation of their fears of a racist backlash from its rank and file ‘white’ members, and their concern about retaining their authority and power over these members, forced it to retreat from a position of support for ‘black’ self-organisation to one where they began to slow down the pace of change.

This volte-face manifested itself publicly for the first time during the 1987 annual conference when the NEC postponed debate on the PAWP report recommendations. After two years and one of the most extensive consultation exercises ever undertaken in the union’s history, the PAWP report had made the following recommendations:

- a. the introduction of an equal opportunities statement declaring the union’s commitment to a programme of positive action to ensure that the union is more accessible to black members and other disadvantaged groups;

- b. group representatives on the District Equal Opportunities Committee should have reserved seats on the district council;
- c. reserved seats for chairpersons of each of the self-organised groups on the NEC enabling 'the union to combine redressing the under-representation of disadvantaged groups with the important task of finding a way to tie the groups into the union structure so that two-way accountability is ensured;
- d. endorsing the structure for the National Black Members Co-ordinating Committee agreed at the NALGO black members conference in January 1989 so that each district would be allocated a number of seats to reflect the size of the black membership locally. On this basis the Metropolitan District would be allocated eight seats, West Midlands two seats and the rest one each (PAWP 1987: 26-28).

However, in the light of emerging rank and file 'white' opposition, the NEC declared that they were

...unable to accept some of the major recommendations in the report, including the proposed basis for the four self-organised committees, the replacement of district equal opportunities committees by self organised committees and the use of rule 115 by district councils to ensure the representation of self organised groups on district service conditions committees. It, therefore, resolved to prepare its own white paper for Conference, taking into account the work done by the Positive Action Working Party, but incorporating a constructive

statement of how closer co-operation can be achieved with disadvantaged groups in future and how it is being addressed at present (cited in NALGO 1988: 40).

This change in policy was not without its costs causing a serious split within the NEC itself with the three NEC members who had sat on the PAWP publicly criticising the official NEC stance (Public Service July 1987: 8). Judith Crabtree, one of the three NEC members, argued that the NEC's proposals implied that 'The NEC have said self-organisation is fine as long as you do it our way. That is an insult' (Public Service July 1987: 3). The union's journal, Public Service carried a full report of the debate under the headline 'SABOTAGE' (Public Service July 1987: 8) in which Judith Crabtree asked:

...whether the NEC had deliberately stalled on a 1985 instruction to present a report to the 1987 conference on positive action. Or whether it had genuinely sought to extend the period of consultation on the proposals because of their fundamental nature.

Uncertainty over the formal union position on 'black' self-organisation remained for a year until the NEC presented the results of its own report to the 1988 annual conference. The NEC claimed that its white paper, entitled Positive Action in NALGO (PAIN):

...avoided the danger of pushing too far ahead of the membership but still represented the most ambitious programme for positive action to be adopted by any trade union (NALGO 1989: 32).

Norrie Steele of the NEC, speaking in support of the PAIN white paper at the 1988 annual conference argued that:

The most important thing is to get acceptance by the general membership. This is a trade union and we must all be involved in decisions. The whole membership must be united behind the policy (cited in Public Service July 1988: 3).

Hence, the fear of a racist rank and file backlash had forced the NEC to retreat from its position of supporting 'black' self-organisation as agreed at the 1985 conference. As an elected body that derived its authority and power ultimately from its membership, it had decided that at this point in time the pace of change was too rapid for the majority of 'white' members to accept and would prove counter-productive to the tackling of racism:

The National Executive Council recognises that in order to motivate and mobilise the union as a whole to eradicate irrational prejudice and unjust discrimination it will be necessary to make ordinary members aware of the unfairness which results from 'benign neglect' and convince them of the

measures which are necessary to eliminate it both in the short and the longer term. The mere adoption of radical policies at Conference will have little or no effect. Indeed, if the policies adopted go too far beyond what members accept as reasonable it may even be counter-productive. The proposals which the National Executive is putting to Conference seek to give a decisive lead to the union which will attract the firm, active and sustained support of individual members. Positive action should be an organic growth within NALGO rather than a superficial accretion (NEC NALGO 1988: 3).

The NEC then went on to justify its continued support for 'black' self-organisation but in a form that was radically different to that perceived by the black members' groups themselves (NEC NALGO 1988: 4):

Self-organisation arises from the premise that those who experience prejudice and disadvantage are best able to understand it and its effects and should be enabled to come together to share their experiences; ensure a voice within the union; act as a pressure group to challenge the assumptions of members who do not experience discrimination which flows sometimes unintentionally, from existing practices. But such groups should be integral to the union as a whole...so that the whole union is involved in the achievement of equality.

This conception of 'black' self-organisation was contrasted positively to the black members' group's conception of 'black' self-organisation, which according to the NEC, amounted to separatism (NEC NALGO 1988: 4):

But self-organisation is not separatism. The self-organised group - whether at national, district or branch level - must be very much part of the union. It has a right to expect support and resources from the union and in return has a duty to feed its thinking back into the union, however, uncomfortable an experience this may be. It should lead to fuller and better informed discussion and debate and should seek to draw the widest cross-section of members into equal opportunities activity. This will strengthen the union and make it more representative of its membership. It should also lead to more members from the groups who face discrimination becoming involved in the union in other capacities - as shop stewards, branch executive members, or as activists at district and national level.

In order for the NEC to successfully introduce its own conception of 'black' self-organisation, it had to undermine the power of those NALGO Regional District Councils, especially the Metropolitan District (encompassing the Greater London NALGO branches) where rank and file support for the 'black' 'racial formation' project was greatest. This it did through the clever manipulation of administrative procedures of which the most important was its declaration that seats on the NBMCC - the highest decision-making body of the 'black' members' groups - would no longer be

distributed in proportion to the size of the 'black' population in each district but evenly across all the NALGO districts throughout the country without reference to the size of the local 'black' population (NEC NALGO 1988: 17). This proposed reduction in the number of 'black' representatives from the Metropolitan District would have the effect of reducing the weight of opinion in the NBMCC of those members from areas that demanded the greatest action to combat racism.

The debate on the PAWP and PAIN motions took place at the 1988 annual conference amidst a highly charged atmosphere. Reflecting the uncertainty and confusion that existed amongst the delegates at conference, both motions were rejected (NALGO 1989: 32). In October 1988, the NEC put forward a series of recommendations which were communicated to branches by circular and which formed the basis of the 1989 motion to annual conference. In this circular, the NEC acknowledged the need for '*some* degree of autonomy and independence of existing structures' whilst at the same time stressing the importance of the 1984 REWP recommendation to not let 'white workers off the hook' and ensure they were involved in the task of combatting racism. Significantly, the circular went on to recommend that 'composition of the NBMCC should be based on one representative from each district' (Daly 1988; also cited in NALGO 1989: 32-33).

The proceedings at the sixth national black members' conference held in Bradford, shortly after the announcement of the NEC recommendations reinforced the growing polarisation between the black members' groups and the NEC. The NBMCC endorsed

a proposal that 'black' NALGO members should only recognise directly elected and accountable representatives. Azim Hajee, a leading NBMCC representative, argued:

We want an element of self-reliance and organisation ...the NEC wants a Bantustan Committee ...We will stick to the principle that anybody who speaks on our behalf must be accountable to us; and we will resist attempts by the NEC to hoist upon us people who are supposed to speak for us (cited in Black Action 1989a: 2).

To secure this objective they called for the development of a more self-reliant financial structure in the form of a fighting fund under the direct control of the NBMCC so as to reduce their independence on the union nationally (Public Service 1988 November: 2). To the NEC, this suggestion was interpreted as being tantamount to a demand for an autonomous 'black' union within NALGO. In moving the NEC motion at the 1989 annual conference, John McFadden (NEC) the general secretary of NALGO, argued that the NEC's proposal would counter any such strategy:

Self-organisation is one thing but autonomy is another ...The NEC is satisfied it has carried out its policy of positive action, but it is not giving a blank cheque to allow Conference decisions to be overturned by other groups (cited in Public Service July 1989: 5).

Putting forward the NBMCC motion Azim Hajee responded by arguing that:

The real issue is how can self-organisation in this union allow the grassroots voice of black members to be heard at the top ...You can't have it both ways. You can't say you are for self-organisation and then only listen to what you want to (cited in Black Action 1989b: 14; Public Service July 1989: 5).

He encouraged the NEC to

Ask the people who are discriminated against what the problems are by allowing oppressed people to organise themselves ...Self-organisation does not lead to division - it has led to a strengthening of NALGO.

He concluded by asking the NEC and Conference to re-instate a form of 'black' self-organisation where representation on the NBMCC should be 'by and from' district black members' groups. For the second consecutive year, delegates at annual conference were faced with two opposing motions: on the one hand, the NBMCC motion as endorsed by two successive black members' conferences and based on the principle that anyone speaking on behalf of 'black' members should be directly accountable to 'black' members and that the representation of the NBMCC should reflect the geographical distribution of black NALGO members throughout the country. On the other hand, the NEC motion which attempted to reduce the influence of radical 'black' activists in the Metropolitan District of NALGO and ensure that 'white'

NALGO members had an input into the elections of 'black' representatives and the formulation of anti-racist strategy and tactics.

However, when the two motions were put to the 1989 NALGO annual conference, they were both defeated by narrow margins: the NEC motion was lost by 23,000 votes whilst the NBMCC motion by only 8,600 votes out of a total of 600,000 votes cast (Public Service July 1989: 5). The lack of a clear decision contributed to a further deterioration in the relationship between the NEC and the NBMCC culminating in the NEC temporarily withdrawing funding for the 1989 national black members' conference scheduled for December 1989 (NALGO 1990: 26). According to the NEC, support for the conference would only be forthcoming on getting agreement of the future composition of the committee arguing it was unacceptable to continue to recognise and facilitate meetings of the committee as presently constituted in defiance of the decisions made at the 1988 and 1989 NALGO annual conferences (NALGO 1990: 26).

The NEC then charged the NBMCC with arresting the union's pioneering attempts to combat racism by continuing to focus on the issue of representation in the union. The NEC contended they were:

...most concerned that the implementation of NALGO'S commitment to positive action and self-organisation for identified disadvantaged groups is being jeopardised. NALGO was a pioneer in the field, both in identifying the

issues involved in achieving equality for all our members; in being prepared to deploy substantial resources in pursuit of the objective; and in taking what some saw as a risky and potentially divisive route via self-organisation. In the event, the input of the NBMCC on behalf of black members on issues of substance affecting them has been limited because of a concentration on, in essence, the sovereignty of a black members' conference and an unwillingness to accept decisions of NALGO Conference, at least until they accord with its own views. The Council remains convinced that with mutual goodwill, there should have been little difficulty in agreeing generally acceptable arrangements in the interests of NALGO's black members and the union as a whole (cited in NALGO 1990: 27).

Importantly, the NEC went on to the offensive by mobilising wider branch (mainly 'white') activist opinion against the national black members' committee when it decided to distribute a circular from the general secretary, John Daly (1989), to all branches:

...which set out the extent to which the Council's representatives had tried to implement the union's policy on self-organisation within the structures of the union, a policy to which they are committed, but also to give branches an insight into the very real concerns they had, that to accept the approach adopted by certain members of the NBMCC would result in the establishment of an autonomous national committee operating independently of the union. The

Council's aim was to reach an agreement which would link a self-organised black members' committee to the rest of the union structures not one that separated the two.

The impact of appealing to opinion at branch level over this issue coupled with the regular labelling by the NEC of the NBMCC as 'separatist' (see Public Service July 1990: 6) was enough to swing a numerically decisive layer of delegate opinion at the 1990 annual conference towards the NEC motion (NALGO 1991; Public Service July 1990: 6). In essence, this endorsement led to a major reduction in the power held by representatives from the Metropolitan District: rather than securing eight of the 30 proposed seats on the NBMCC, 'black' members from the Metropolitan district obtained only four seats from a reduced committee size of 25. The basis of representation on the NBMCC became 19 district representatives; two from the East Midlands; North West and North Western; West Midlands; and Yorkshire and Humberside; four from the Metropolitan District and one each from the remaining seven districts. In addition, there were six co-opted members making the total of 25. These district representatives were to be elected by the district black members' groups and had to be 'endorsed by district councils to whom they would be accountable through the district black members' groups within the aims and objectives of NALGO' (NALGO 1991: 17).

The NEC hailed the decision as a 'historic day for tackling racism. We are determined to go forward with all the black members in this union' (Ivan Beavis, NEC member

cited in Public Service July 1990: 6). It used growing concern over the problem of racism in the wider society and the need for NALGO to combat it to justify the closure of the debate on the nature and form of representation in the union:

... at a time when the black and ethnic minority members of NALGO, in common with other black people in this country and abroad, continued to face widespread discrimination and were threatened by a menacing rise in racist activity and racial violence, it was important that the committee approved by Conference was established as soon as possible to give a lead in tackling the real problems facing black members of the union (NALGO 1991: 18).

However, for the NBMCC, the 1990 annual conference decision represented a decisive defeat for their conception of 'black' self-organisation in NALGO. By reducing the power of 'black' representatives from the metropolitan district on the NBMCC, the annual conference had decisively rejected the belief that the pace of change in combatting racism should be determined by 'black' members alone. Although the Metropolitan Black Members' Group refused to send representatives to the new NBMCC when it first met in November 1990 (NALGO 1991: 18), it was evident, by early 1991, that the proposed changes had served to greatly weaken the power of these activists to determine the agenda of the NBMCC. By 1992, debate concerning the nature and form of representation in the union had dissipated and the union turned its energies towards combatting racism outside of the union (see NALGO 1992; NALGO 1993).

Conclusions

This chapter considered some of the complex difficulties associated with developing an anti-racist politics in trade unions during an era of weak class identity in which organised labour had suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of the employers and the Conservative government. It showed how, debate on this subject in the local state trade union, NALGO was transformed in the aftermath of the urban unrest and the subsequent opening up of non-manual local state employment to 'black' workers. After initial attempts to work with the NALGO leadership (especially the NEC) over how best to combat racism were rejected, many 'black' activists came to the view that racism would be combatted most effectively through 'black' self-organisation within NALGO where those who were subjected to racism had a pre-eminent right in determining how it was combatted.

Underlying this support for a 'black' 'racial formation' project was not a desire for separatism but rather a recognition that in an era of weak class identification, many 'white workers' would be reluctant to take the sorts of action that were necessary to combat racism effectively. However, an important implication of this proposed strategy was that the role of 'whites' in general and the NEC in particular, would have been reduced to that of ratifying and supporting unconditionally the anti-racist policies and tactics devised by 'black' activists. Despite demonstrating a personal commitment to challenging racism, this policy was unacceptable to the NEC. They were acutely aware of the fact that they derived their authority and power from their membership (of whom

the majority were 'white') and that support for 'black-self-organisation was likely to provoke a racist backlash from some of these 'white' members which would jeopardise this authority. Consequently, the NEC advanced an alternative way of combatting racism that was based on the twin ideological considerations of ensuring that 'black' workers had an important say in anti-racist policy formulation but that at the same time such policies and actions would have to secure majority 'white' support.

After some bitter debates at national conference over these two competing strategies, 'black' self-organisation was finally recognised in 1985. However, no sooner had the union declared its support for 'black' self-organisation than the sort of 'white' rank and file opposition the NEC had feared came to fruition. Realising that such 'white' rank and file discontent could threaten their authority and power, the NEC set about taking measures to re-assert control over the black members' groups. Finding that activist opinion was initially split over support for 'black' self-organisation, the NEC used disreputable methods such as mis-representing the black members' groups as being 'separatist' to ensure the defeat of the principle of 'black' self-organisation. By 1990, the black members' groups were integrated into the existing structures of the union and their role re-defined as that of an advisory body responsible for articulating the concerns and opinions of 'black' NALGO workers to the main body of the union.

8 ‘Racial formation’ in trade union branches in the 1990s: its origins, strengths and limitations

Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed the ways in which anti-racist debate at a national level in NALGO was transformed by the establishment of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in the early 1980s. Significantly, it was also found that the main source of support for this anti-racist project lay in the Metropolitan District (encompassing the Great London NALGO branches) and included a layer of ‘white’ activist opinion (as evidenced by the number of motions submitted to annual conference in support of ‘black’ self-organisation). Yet, apart from this, little is known about the impact of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project at a local branch level. To redress this, this chapter considers the following. First, why were ‘black members’ groups established at branch level? Second, what were the factors that led to the formation of an ‘inter-racial’ coalition, that is, why did many ‘white’ activists support the black members’ groups? Third, what was the basis of opposition to the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project at branch level? Fourth, and after a decade of ‘black’ self-organisation in NALGO, what have been its strengths and limitations in challenging racism and exclusionary practices?

The research was undertaken in three town halls located in local authority areas with high 'black' community concentrations: the outer London borough of Ealing (encompassing the town of Southall) with a resident 'black' population of 32 per cent, comprising mainly of 'Indians'; the inner London borough of Camden with a resident 'black' population of 18 per cent, comprising mainly of 'Africans' and 'Bangladeshis'; and, the outer London borough of Hillingdon with a resident 'black' population of twelve per cent, comprising mainly of middle class 'South Asians' that had recently moved out of the nearby working class area of Southall (OPCS 1991: 80, Table 5).

The 'ethnic' composition of the Ealing council workforce altered dramatically following the election of a radical Labour administration in 1986. Only three per cent of the workforce were of 'ethnic minority' origin in 1986, whereas, by 1988, this figure had increased to 16 per cent, and, by 1989 to 20 per cent. The workforce audit carried out in 1990 revealed that 11 per cent of these workers were of 'South Asian' origin and eight per cent were of 'Caribbean' origin (London Borough of Ealing 1990: 7-8). Further, nearly two thirds of all 'black' employees were female (62 per cent) compared to just over a third who were men (38 per cent) with about half represented in the lower grades of council work (London Borough of Ealing 1990). The branch secretary of Ealing NALGO estimated that of Ealing NALGO's total membership of 2,460 about ten per cent were 'black' workers (NALGO 1987b).

Data on the 'ethnic' composition of the workforce in Camden council was unavailable at the time the interviews with union activists were carried out. However, evidence

provided by senior council employees suggested that between 20 and 25 per cent of the council workforce were of 'ethnic minority' origin. Data from the 1994 workforce audit appears to substantiate this judgement with 26 per cent of the total workforce being of 'ethnic minority' origin (London Borough of Camden 1996: 22). However, despite the relatively high proportion of 'black' workers in Camden council, the Camden NALGO branch secretary estimated that between ten and twelve per cent of the total Camden NALGO branch membership of 5,435 were of 'ethnic minority' origin (NALGO 1987b).

No data was available to estimate the size of the 'ethnic minority' workforce in Hillingdon council at the time the research was carried out. However, evidence from senior council employees suggested that about five per cent of the council workforce were of 'ethnic minority' origin with the Hillingdon NALGO branch secretary estimating that not more three per cent of the total branch membership of 2,004 were of 'ethnic minority' origin.

Since the focus of this part of the study was in part to establish how self-organisation had come to be established in each of the three NALGO branches, a purposive sampling strategy was employed where only stewards who had been active in union activities since at least the formation of the self organised groups were selected. Through discussions with union officials from each of the three branches it was established that there were ten 'black' stewards in Ealing; ten in Camden and eight in Hillingdon who met this requirement. Five 'white' stewards from each of the three

branches were also interviewed along with the secretary of each branch. Overall, a total of 46 interviews were carried out with union activists in these three branches.

The origins of ‘black’ self-organisation in Ealing and Camden NALGO

In Ealing and Camden NALGO, two ideological perspectives informed the establishment of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project: socialism and nationalism. ‘Black’ socialist activists supported black members’ groups for three main reasons. First, there existed a strongly-held perception that ‘black’ activists were more likely to challenge racism than ‘white’ stewards because having also been subject to the racialisation process meant they were relatively more attuned to recognising the prevalence of racism than were ‘white’ stewards. Hence, an activist in Ealing Black NALGO, contended that ‘most white stewards are blind to the impact of racism because they’ve never experienced it...[whereas] racism affects me as a black person and I see the injustices that go on’. Another steward in Ealing Black NALGO forcefully stated that ‘black’ stewards

...are better able to represent black members who have suffered racial harassment than any white stewards - no matter how well meaning that white steward is because that black steward also shares the same experience of racism.

A second factor underlying support for 'black' self-organisation amongst this layer of socialist 'black' activists was the hope that it would help to undermine the perception of the union as a 'white man's organisation' (see Lee 1984), encourage greater 'black' participation and representation in local trade union activities and thereby make the union more representative of all its membership. According to a 'black' steward from Camden NALGO, until recently, 'black' workers 'have had no faith in the union because of what's gone on in the past and don't feel comfortable playing an active part in an organisation which is predominantly white'. Similarly, an activist in Ealing Black NALGO declared that 'the union is seen as a white union, the executive in Ealing is a white body and this discourages black people to take part in union activities'. A 'black' steward in Camden NALGO argued that most 'black' workers refused to participate in union activities because they

...see the union as unrepresentative of black workers interests. Black workers think there's no point in getting involved because what can they change? They think if we can get on to the executive which has 15 white people and one black person we'll get nothing changed, so why bother? I think this is unfortunate. Trade unions should play a bigger role in addressing the problems faced by black workers and that is what we are trying to do through black self-organisation.

The third factor underpinning support for black members' groups amongst 'black' socialist activists was the belief that it would act as a catalyst and encourage a layer of

‘white’ activist opinion into recognising that challenging racism would also contribute to a strengthening of ‘inter-racial’ solidarity in the local branch over ‘non-racial’ issues. Hence, a ‘black’ steward from Ealing argued forcefully that:

Black NALGO is a political change... We are, as the white workers are, part of the working class - we are the exploited. Black NALGO is about scaring the hell out of white workers to say, we either get on or we fight on our own. If we fight on our own, we expose you, by us exposing you we weaken you. We can also grow stronger by you using us; by using us, you get more active black members, you get a stronger union, you get a stronger you.

Right from the outset, there was a clear recognition amongst these ‘black’ socialist activists that ‘white’ activist support needed to be courted if the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project was to prove successful in challenging racism and exclusionary practices:

...bearing in mind we are only 4 per cent - I see the white working class as fellow agents of change - I do believe we need a significant proportion on our side to implement any change (‘black’ steward from Camden NALGO).

Whilst recognising the ideological hold of racism over both ‘white’ activists and workers in an era of weak class identity, these ‘black’ activists refused to accept it was insurmountable, instead expressing optimistically that most ‘white’ workers’ ‘attitudes

could be worked upon', distinguishing between two types of racists: 'the majority have racist ideas because of ignorance, it is only a small minority who are organised racists'.

Whilst 'black' socialists were the main force behind the establishment of the local black members' groups in Camden and Ealing NALGO, both black members' groups also contained a small but significant group of activists that adhered to a black nationalist perspective (Carmichael and Hamilton 1968). This group of activists were highly doubtful about the prospect of 'white' activists, and especially 'white' workers overcoming racism and engaging in 'inter-racial' class action. A 'black' steward in Camden NALGO claimed that 'all white workers are racist to varying degrees and even some who I thought were not, have been...I see very little hope for change'. A 'black' steward in Ealing NALGO, whilst acknowledging the possibility that not all 'white' workers were racist, contended 'I reserve judgement...until some issue arises and they prove themselves'.

Echoing the discussion about anti-racist tactics and strategy in Britain more widely (see Sivanandan 1982; Gilroy 1987) these black nationalist activists adhered to the view that the material rewards accrued by 'white' workers from racism had contributed to the establishment of a racist inter-class 'racial formation' project which had ruled out the possibility that 'white' workers would ever combat racism:

All white workers are racist because racism is about power and exploiting and because white people are comfortable in the present situation because they are wielding power...they will never change.

For these nationalist activists, the 'black' 'racial formation' project in the form of the local black members' group was a permanent testimony of the failure of 'white' workers to combat racism:

...self organisation is the only way forward, simply because change has got to come from within, you have to help yourself, by putting the agenda for black people by black people.

Driven by these two competing ideological perspectives, a black members' group was established in Ealing NALGO in 1985 (Ealing Black NALGO 1987a; 1987b). However, it was not until the election of a radical Labour administration in 1986 and the subsequent entry of large numbers of 'black' workers into local state employment (Ealing Black NALGO 1987b) that the group became fully active. A constitution reflecting the concerns of this 'black' membership was drawn up outlining its commitment to:

- a. combat institutionalised and individual racism and to provide solidarity and support for all black workers in Ealing;

- b. to fight for real equal opportunity, against under representation of black workers in the workforce of Ealing Council;
- c. to fight against racism and sexism within the trade unions and to increase the participation and influence of black workers in the trade unions;
- d. to establish links with the Black Communities to campaign for better borough services to meet the particular needs of black people in Ealing (Ealing Black NALGO 1987: 2).

Since a radical Labour administration was already in office in Camden council at the time of the urban unrest in 1981, the entry of large numbers of 'black' workers into non-manual local state employment proceeded much earlier than in Ealing Council. The immediate events leading up to the establishment of the Camden black workers group lay in the council's attempts to organise a conference to discuss racist harassment at work (CBWG no date a). However, nearly all those invited were 'white', senior managers (see CBWG no date a) which caused consternation amongst the new layer of 'black' activists, who contended they were:

...dissatisfied with the way issues of deep concern to the Black communities were being discussed, and that once again, we seemed to be reacting to issues and policies that had been predetermined in our absence (CBWG no date a: 2).

In response, 'black' activists organised their own conference on 19th March 1983 which was attended by 150 'black' workers. It was at this conference that the first

embryonic statement in support of 'black' self organisation in Camden NALGO was articulated:

We aim to be united and support each other. We want to build - nothing short of that will do - a real independent, self-reliant organisation of black workers rooted firmly in the workplace, to enable us to help ourselves; to build a united voice to promote the interests of black workers and which will be heard by unions and management (CBWG no date a: 2).

The conference also adopted a constitution which declared its main objectives to:

- a. combat institutionalised and individual racism and to provide solidarity and support for all black workers in Camden;
- b. fight for real equal opportunity and against over-representation of black workers in manual and lower grade jobs, lack of adequate secondment and training and the lack of promotion prospects;
- c. fight against racism within the trade unions and to increase the participation and influence of black workers in the trade unions;
- d. work with the black community to improve the quality of the borough's services to meet the particular needs of black people in Camden (CBWG no date b: 1).

Towards an ‘inter-racial’ coalition around a ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project

Despite the dominant influence of socialists within the black members’ group in Ealing NALGO, the initial response of most ‘white’ activists towards the group was one of suspicion. The roots of such scepticism were outlined by the Ealing NALGO branch secretary: ‘We [the branch officials] ...wanted to fight racism but we weren’t sure that self organisation was the way forward...we were worried about separatism’. A leading ‘black’ activist in the black members’ group described relations between the local branch officials and the black members’ group as being highly strained during the mid-1980s:

...we constantly had to fight the white bureaucracy and explain that self organisation was not a device to cause conflict but should be looked upon as an addition to the labour movement.

‘White’ activist concern over the establishment of a black members’ group starkly manifested itself in 1987 when the branch executive committee - the key decision making body at branch level - refused a request from the black members’ group for financial assistance to organise the first black workers conference for workers employed by Ealing Council (Ealing Black NALGO 1987b). According to a leading ‘black’ activist at the time:

The union did not support us. Ealing Black NALGO had to do all the work and argued with the employer for black workers to have time off to attend the conference. Because we didn't have formal local union support, we had an uphill task convincing managers that they should give time off to black workers. We had to tell white lay representatives to tell black workers of the Black Workers Conference. It was very difficult.

It was only during the course of a strike called in late 1987 by Ealing NALGO to secure London weighting for all council workers that 'white' activists began to revise their opinions on the local black members' group. They saw during this dispute the ways in which 'black' socialist activists convinced an initially suspicious 'black' rank and file workforce of the importance of supporting strike action. One of these 'black' socialist activists explained how:

Black NALGO in Ealing directed their campaign towards fellow black workers, explaining to them the issues involved in the strike. We made sure that they came out on strike and didn't see the union as a white man's organisation.

Another 'black' steward argued how he targeted 'black' workers in his department and encouraged them to come out on strike. He also encouraged them to 'to be pickets and not just stay at home'. The campaign to mobilise 'black' workers for strike action was a success:

...during the strike, black workers were at the forefront of the strike...it was black members' group that organised all the black workers on the main gate picket line - gave them confidence, made them feel involved...although we never stopped white workers from joining the picket line as well...the white membership saw this and attitudes did change ('black' steward in Ealing NALGO).

This was confirmed by a 'white' activist who had played a leading role in the dispute and, who like others, had initially refused to support self organisation: 'I was obliged to support them because they had supported the union in their concerns'. The construction of an 'inter-racial' class solidarity over a 'non-racial' issue that developed during the course of this strike was enough to convince members of the previously hesitant branch executive committee of the need to support the local black members' group. According to one 'black' activist, since the dispute:

Locally, NALGO has created an environment where it is easier for black people to conduct their own meetings...they give us resources and have moved some way, but it is up to us to push them further.

At the time the research was carried out, about half the 'white' stewards in Ealing NALGO supported the local black members' group. However, according to the Ealing NALGO branch secretary and most of the 'white' activists interviewed in Ealing council, the construction of this 'inter-racial' coalition around a 'black' 'racial

formation' project remained conditional on the continued dominance of socialist activists within the self organised group because their ideological outlook ensured that 'black' self-organisation would also lead to a strengthening of the union:

They would ensure that the group influenced what other institutions do to ensure black people play a part in them. This is the way of breeding activists for the trade union movement as a whole as well. I think there is a difference in what I've described and setting up as a black members' group solely as a separate group.

This was confirmed by interviews with sympathetic 'white' activists who placed great hope in the ability of the black members' group to not only combat racism but strengthen the union in the process. One 'white' steward hoped the black members' group would become 'a transmission belt for producing black lay representatives' whilst another 'white' steward believed the black members' group would help to overcome the widespread prevalence of racism within the working class:

I think that most white workers are racist to some degree because we cannot understand what black people experience...Historically, due to having an Empire white workers were racist, but it doesn't mean they can't change by making them understand that it is in their interests to unite with black workers.

Unlike Ealing NALGO, where there was considerable opposition from most ‘white’ activists to the local black members’ group at its inception, in Camden NALGO, support was quickly forthcoming from around half the ‘white’ activists. As the Camden NALGO branch secretary who had been in office throughout the 1980s declared: ‘I don’t see much hope for a trade union movement that doesn’t appeal to all its members. It has to be responsive to black trade unionists.’ Such support was strengthened by the strong influence exercised by the socialist activists within the CBWG who forcefully stated

[We] believe in working within the trade unions since we understand that we are all union members and have to demand that they take up our issues and give access to what is ours by right (CBWG no date a: 2).

Organised opposition to the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in Ealing and Camden NALGO

Importantly, as I have stressed throughout this study, activist and worker trade union consciousness on the matter of racism and anti-racism does not shift in the same direction en bloc. Whilst ‘black’ self-organisation was supported by most ‘black’ activists and about half the ‘white’ stewards in Camden and Ealing NALGO, two currents of organised opposition did emerge to challenge their dominance.

The revolutionary class perspective

The first of these I shall henceforth refer to as the revolutionary class perspective. In Camden NALGO, a small number of 'black' shop stewards and about half the 'white' stewards adhered to this perspective, whereas in Ealing NALGO, a small number of 'white' stewards did. These activists tended to belong to neo-Leninist revolutionary organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Militant and saw themselves as 'tribunes' of the working class whose primary aim was to unify the working class with the purpose of affecting radical social change. Whilst these activists acknowledged the existence and prevalence of working class racism they maintained that it was the 'state and economic system that perpetuates [it] and uses it to divide the black and 'white' working class' ('white' steward in Camden NALGO). Great emphasis was placed on combatting racism: 'The fight for black equality is one of the most important tasks for the trade union movement' ('white' steward from Ealing NALGO). However, according to a 'white' steward in Camden NALGO, since racism was endemic within capitalist social formations 'I don't believe the oppressed groups in society can be relieved of their oppression without a radical transformation of society'. With an ideological outlook that placed primary emphasis on the establishment of a class identity to achieve their stated aims, it was unsurprising to find that this current of revolutionary class activists disagreed with the formation of local black members' groups in Camden and Ealing NALGO.

The precise sources of this disagreement were two-fold. First, they questioned the validity of one of the central underpinnings of the 'black' 'racial formation' project - that 'black' stewards were more likely to challenge racism than 'white' stewards. For a 'black' revolutionary steward in Camden NALGO, the evidence suggested otherwise: 'I know of black stewards who have been totally reactionary in my department and not supported strike action whereas white stewards and workers have come out in support'. For these revolutionary stewards, organising opposition to racism on the basis of a 'racial' identity was problematic:

I disagree with it...its divisive of black and white workers. I'm not a black trade unionist but a trade unionist who is black...class is the determinant not race ('black' steward in Camden NALGO).

Alternately, for stewards advancing a revolutionary class perspective, whether a worker challenged racism was dependent 'on your political consciousness not your skin colour'. A 'white' steward from Ealing NALGO cited in evidence the example of the failure of Mrs Thatcher to improve the lot of working women: There's a classic argument about lets have women leaders. Okay, so we had a woman Prime Minister. What has she done for women?'

The second and related source of disagreement with the 'black' 'racial formation' project was the revolutionary class stewards' concern that the black members' groups would be unable to effectively challenge racism without the support of 'white' workers.

A 'white' steward from Camden claimed 'blacks are the minority, they can't change the situation themselves... they need to look at where they can get support from white workers'. A 'white' steward in Ealing NALGO re-iterated this point when he contended that: 'I can't see how they can possibly do it on their own'. Yet, according to these revolutionary class stewards, this was precisely what the local black members' groups were proposing by 'ghettoising' the problem of racism and thereby failing to expose 'white' rank and file workers to debates and ideas that would counter the prevalence of racist sentiment amongst them. As a result, one 'white' steward in Ealing concluded

I don't think separatist groups help. I'd like to see us working together. When people organise amongst themselves, issues like racism and sexism aren't discussed by everyone but by black people alone in these groups...most white workers are not made aware of these issues because they are never discussed with them.

Additionally, the establishment of a black members' group marginalised an important layer of 'white' activist opinion that were committed to challenging racism. A 'white' revolutionary steward in Camden NALGO asked:

...what role does it leave for individuals like me? I became politically active in the Anti-Nazi League and probably more than any other single issue I have been involved in anti-racist struggles.

In the light of these ideological disagreements with the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project, these revolutionary stewards contended that a more effective means by which to combat racism would be through the construction of an ‘inter-racial’ alliance. A ‘white’ steward in Camden NALGO declared ‘I look to white workers and black workers who are not racist to change the ideas of white workers who unfortunately are’ whilst a ‘black’ revolutionary steward in this branch contended that:

If a certain section of the trade union is being discriminated against by white trade unionists then the answer is to set up a body of black and white anti-racists to fight this, not set up a black body because you think all white people are a problem.

The colour-blind perspective

The branch secretaries of Ealing and Camden NALGO estimated that only a ‘handful’ of ‘white’ activists in each branch and a ‘couple’ of ‘black’ activists in Camden NALGO adhered to a colour-blind perspective. Whilst the revolutionary class perspective acknowledged the existence of working class racism but opposed the strategy of ‘racial formation’ proposed to combat it, those stewards that adhered to a colour-blind perspective contended that all NALGO members faced the same problems; refused to acknowledge the existence of racism and thereby questioned the very legitimacy of the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project. A ‘white’ female steward in

Ealing NALGO contended that: 'we're all union members... I don't see how racism comes into it. They're...[black members] looked after as well as anyone else'. She continued that: 'The trade union movement is certainly not racist...There's no racism in NALGO whatsoever'. Indeed, as far as these activists were concerned, any problems that 'black' workers faced at work was not the result of racism but their 'failure to integrate': 'We should all be one...I don't think they are necessary...they're segregating us' (a 'white' steward in Ealing NALGO). A 'white' steward who advocated a colour-blind perspective re-iterated that

...they're not needed. NALGO has allowed the black members' party to be set up. I'm sorry they have come to that decision...it's like a bureaucratic party. It's like a black union within a union.

Hillingdon NALGO: the dominance of the colour-blind perspective and its implications for anti-racist action

In Hillingdon NALGO, the unanimous support given to a colour-blind perspective by 'white' stewards and about half of the 'black' stewards ensured that the local black members' group was still-born. Unlike Camden and Ealing Councils, where a radical Labour administration had been the catalyst to the formation of a local black members' group, through its decision to open up local state employment to 'black' workers, the political complexion of Hillingdon Council remained Conservative throughout much

of the 1980s. As a result, the council saw no substantial increase in the number of 'black' workers entering local state employment in the immediate aftermath of the urban unrest. Of course, this is not to suggest that there weren't any 'black' workers working for Hillingdon Council; rather that they had entered local state employment prior to the urban unrest and tended to be senior managers who demonstrated little concern for anti-racist concerns and the establishment of a local black members' group.

These activists tended to deny the existence of racism in Hillingdon NALGO or the council itself: 'I have been here 21 years and I have never seen or been affected by racism in anyway...I haven't come across any issues of racism' (a 'black' steward). One of the central factors that had motivated 'black' and 'white' activists to support the establishment of a black members' group in Ealing and Camden NALGO was the hope it would increase 'black' participation and representation in general trade union activities. However, for those stewards supporting a colour-blind perspective, the reasons for 'black' worker inactivity in union affairs were identical to those associated with 'white' workers such as passivity and dis-interest: 'black workers can't be bothered to stand' (a 'white' steward) whilst another 'white' steward declared that 'they [black members] can't be bothered, the vacancies are there but it's sheer laziness'.

It was against this background of strong opposition from most 'white' workers and about half the 'black' activists that a black members' group was established in

Hillingdon NALGO in 1986 by a handful of ‘black’ activists and the branch secretary (Hillingdon Ethnic Group no date). It adopted a constitution which committed itself to:

1. fight for real equal opportunity and against the lack of adequate training and of promotion prospects;
2. work to develop links with other Black workers organisations;
3. ensure that both the Ethnic group and NALGO as a union, develop strategies, support campaigns in order that -

a. the needs of ethnic members’ are adequately provided for in issues like grievance and disciplinary procedures; training, promotion, career progression, recruitment; low pay; welfare and social need.

b. Borough services are improved to meet the particular needs of ethnic people in Hillingdon.

c. ethnic members’ can fully be represented at all levels of NALGO (Hillingdon Ethnic Group no date: 1).

The level of support that the Ealing and Camden black members’ groups attracted amongst ‘black’ and ‘white’ activists demonstrated the extent to which they had now become an accepted feature of the branch landscape. However, the black members’ group in Hillingdon NALGO acquired no such authority in the eyes of most activists. Instead, rather than constituting an organic growth on the local polity arising out of the commonly formulated concerns of local ‘black’ activists, it came to be seen as a highly

fragile body; an artificial accretion imposed on the majority of 'decent' local 'black' and 'white' activists and members by a handful of 'black' militants' and enforced by NALGO nationally.

The marginalisation of those 'black' activists that had established a 'black' members' group in Hillingdon NALGO was aptly demonstrated when one of the 'black' 'colour-blind' activists accused the group of being racist towards 'whites': 'reverse racism is the problem here with black militants'. In Hillingdon Council any 'black' NALGO member that considered participating in the activities of the black members' group risked being labelled a 'militant'. After some intensive questioning it was established that at least part of the explanation for the antagonistic attitude adopted by many 'black' activists that adhered to a colour-blind approach, towards the local black members' group, was partly explained by their attempts to accommodate themselves to the racist sentiment amongst their immediate work colleagues. Distancing themselves from 'black militants' that had established the black members' group ensured they would not be subjected to racism. For one 'black' steward, who, initially had denied the existence of racism and the need for a local black members' group, this meant accepting a deferential position towards his 'white' colleagues which he rationalised by arguing 'we are in a country that is theirs'. He continued that amidst such a 'racially-charged' atmosphere, he was adopting an alternative approach to challenging racism in his local workplace:

In my department, there are only two blacks and when we raise a problem, whites immediately say this is our country and you ought not to be here. I have to be constructive rather than rant and rave about our problem...the softly softly approach is far more effective.

Consequently, the forceful manner in which the Hillingdon black members' group went about challenging racism only served to weaken their personal battle against racism: 'Those blacks are too confrontational and argumentative and embarrass those of us who are moderate' (a 'black' steward).

The highly fragile nature of the 'black' 'racial formation' project in Hillingdon NALGO was illustrated in a dispute over nomenclature that ensued shortly after its formation. We saw in Chapter 2 that the term 'black' is synonymous with a particular form of anti-racist politics in England: the militant struggles of 'black' workers of South Asian and Caribbean descent during the 1960s and 1970s (Sivanandan 1982). Within the Camden and Ealing black members' groups, where most 'black' activists were committed to combatting racism, this term was adopted without opposition. However, in Hillingdon NALGO, half the 'black' activists (and nearly all the 'white' activists) refused to even acknowledge the existence of racism, let alone that it needed to be challenged. In a very real sense then, the use of the term 'black' to signify the black members' groups commitment to challenging racism was contested from the outset with most 'black' activists viewing it as an imposition.

When the newly-appointed equal opportunities officer of Hillingdon Council challenged the usefulness of the term 'black' to describe the different 'non-white' populations in the council, it provided those 'non-white' activists that opposed the formation of the black members' group with the opportunity to weaken the group further. A bitter dispute ensued amongst 'non-white' activists about the most appropriate name by which to refer to the self organised group. On the one hand, there were those activists who wished to retain the term 'black' in the group's name because it signified their commitment to challenging racism, whilst on the other hand, there were those 'non-white' activists who wished to see the group become less 'militant and favoured the alternative title of 'Hillingdon Ethnic Group'.

The social forces lined up against the handful of activists in the Hillingdon black members' group who wished to retain the term 'black' in the group's name were so great that the branch officials quickly conceded to the pressure, and the name was changed to that proposed by the colour-blind activists. The fall-out from this debate proved to be disastrous for anti-racist politics in Hillingdon NALGO, with many activists, especially those of Caribbean descent, leaving in response to what they interpreted as a lack of commitment on the part of Hillingdon NALGO to challenging racism. One of the leading 'black' activists who remained within the group despite its name change, ruefully concluded that the Hillingdon Council's equal opportunities officer had: 'broken up Hillingdon councils' black workers group by dividing black and Asian workers on the definition of black'.

Such a public fracture in the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in Hillingdon NALGO encouraged those racist forces in the branch that had so far been latent, to mobilise against a much-weakened self organised group. According to the branch equal opportunities officer of Hillingdon NALGO, in early 1987:

...just five months after establishing the black members’ group, there was furore over the self-organised group being allowed to meet without white members. They [the ‘white’ members] argued that we were one union.

Such anger had been triggered by an advertisement stating that a leading activist from the Camden black workers group would be speaking at the next meeting of the Hillingdon ethnic group. Two hundred and eighty ‘white’ members signed a petition resigning their membership from the local branch stating as their reasons their opposition to the formation of the self organised group and the decision to invite speakers from outside the council:

We the undersigned wish to express to the Hillingdon Branch of NALGO our outrage at the attached notice (of the next Ethnic Group Meeting) currently being displayed in the Civic Centre. To invite a speaker from Camden NALGO Black Workers Group to meet with ethnic members can only be viewed as divisive and offensive and is surely a retrograde step in the area of racial harmony at work. We believe that the formation of ethnic minority groupings serves no purpose in the continuance of the good relationships that exist in the

work areas of this borough and whatever may be the case in Camden or elsewhere, we want no part of this in Hillingdon - stop it now (cited in Kerry 1987).

The branch equal opportunities officer revealed how these members: 'took the matter to Terry Dicks, [a right-wing] Conservative MP for Hayes and Middlesex who said he would take it to the CRE on the basis that the black workers group were preventing white members from turning up to meetings'. Further evidence of 'white' rank and file opposition towards the Hillingdon ethnic group was demonstrated by evidence that 'notices advertising meetings of the group have been obscenely defaced, and racist literature has been discovered circulating in the Civic Centre' (cited in Kerry 1987).

At this juncture, branch officials were faced with a critical decision upon which the fortunes of the local self-organised group rested: on the one hand, they could take a principled stand against racism by defending the Hillingdon ethnic group and the principle of self organisation, or, on the other hand, they could cave into the demands of the 280 'white' racist members and irreparably damage the fortunes of the local black members' group and anti-racist activity in the council and local branch. The branch secretary chose the latter option and allayed the fears of the racist element of Hillingdon NALGO's membership by claiming that the self-organised group had few decision-making powers and was in effect a 'discussion group'. In a letter sent to all branch members on 26th March 1987, he declared that:

In constitutional terms, the Ethnic Group is at present no more than a discussion group. Any recommendation brought forward by the group have the same status as recommendations brought forward by any individual member. Such recommendations *cannot and will not* be implemented without agreement through the Branch's normal democratic processes - i.e. they will be considered by the branch executive committee or a branch general meeting as appropriate (Coutts 1987).

A 'black' activist in the Hillingdon ethnic minorities group bitterly observed that: 'The branch leadership went into a panic and didn't fight the racism of their members...they compromised themselves on the issue of racism'. Of even more concern was the actions of most 'white' stewards who became the mouthpieces of such racist sentiment in the branch. A 'white' steward contended that the black members' group was 'more counter-productive than productive' whilst a 'white' female steward argued that the Hillingdon ethnic group 'was perceived to be separate which isolated white workers'.

Only Hillingdon NALGO's equal opportunities officer offered principled opposition to this current of racism within the Council. In a letter sent to all members of the branch on 31st March 1987 (Kerry 1987), he outlined the reasons why self organisation must be supported by the union and then directly addressed himself to the reasons why some 'white' workers had objected to the establishment of the self organised group:

Logic and common sense dictates that if you wish to know the views of a disadvantaged group you speak to those particular people, and the most obvious way in getting the views of a whole group of people in a branch is for the group to meet as a group. But it seems that here common sense flies out of the window in Hillingdon, for the setting up of an Ethnic Minorities group appears to be so abhorrent to a few people that a petition has been drawn up and circulated within the Civic Centre with the express aim of preventing this group from ever meeting again.

He argued that those that had signed the petition had done so because they were racist:

You may think that the petition is concerned with NALGO's general position on the setting up of groups, that it is divisive and unnecessary. But it seems strange to me that it is just black and ethnic members who are to be prevented from meeting: I do not recall any outraged opposition to the 'Women in NALGO' Group which has been meeting for over two years now, and for which notices of their meetings are circulated to every woman in the Branch. There was no opposition when every member in the branch received a letter giving notice of the intention to call a meeting for members' in the Branch with disabilities... I draw my own conclusions at the motives behind the petition over the ethnic group.

This officer then went on to state that if the branch was keen on tackling racism, then self organisation must be encouraged:

I do not see self organised groups as dividing the union. My own experience of such groups, both as a former Branch equal opportunities officer and as a delegate to the Metropolitan District equal opportunities committee, has enabled me to see that self-organised groups add to the democracy of the Union by enabling ALL members of the Union to have an equal say.

Whether we like it or not, racism does exist in the London borough of Hillingdon. The Council recognised this fact last year when it decided to appoint an Equal Opportunities Officer with a brief to spend 70% of his time dealing with 'racial' issues. As a Union we will need to talk to this officer and should be able to represent the views and wishes of our ethnic colleagues, those who know just what it is like to be at the receiving end of racism. It is imperative that we as a Branch speak to our ethnic colleagues. I wish the Ethnic Group success.

This forceful and systematic defence of the Hillingdon ethnic group went unheeded. A special branch meeting was called on 13th May 1987 to discuss this matter by which time, branch activists had been made aware that the loss of 280 members meant Hillingdon NALGO branch membership fell below the critical threshold of 2,000 members necessary to secure continued funding from NALGO HQ. Under this

financial threat, the decision was taken to open all future meetings of the Hillingdon ethnic group to all Hillingdon NALGO members irrespective of 'ethnic' origin.

The marginalisation of the Hillingdon ethnic group was complete and a period of racist reaction began. The opening up of the local self-organised group to all members of the branch, irrespective of whether they were racialised subjects negated the *raison d'être* of the 'racial formation' project, and, brought to an end, attempts by activists to force anti-racist action on to the local trade union agenda. Most of the remaining handful of black activists that wished to challenge racism were not prepared to articulate their concerns at fora where some of the perpetrators of such racist activity would be present. This was reflected in the sharp decline in attendance at the Hillingdon ethnic group meetings. In the twelve meetings held between June 1987 and May 1988, that followed the decision to open the self organised group to all members of the branch, average attendance at group meetings declined sharply from between twenty and thirty to eight (Hillingdon ethnic group 1987a; 1987b; 1987c; 1987d; 1987e; 1987f; 1987g; 1988a; 1988b; 1988c; 1988d; 1988e).

Amongst senior management in Hillingdon Council, anti-racist activity became synonymous with the work of 'militant activists' and any 'black' workers that showed an interest in the work of the self organised group were looked upon disapprovingly. As a former 'black' member of the self organised group declared: 'Management in Hillingdon is strong and highlights people who are active in the ethnic minorities group as 'troublemakers''. Amidst this hostile climate towards anti-racist action amongst

employers and union activists alike, incidents of racist hostility and exclusionary practices directed both at the remaining members of the self organised group and the ‘black’ population in general re-emerged. Interviews with the remaining members of the self organised group revealed how they received regular complaints of racism and ‘racial discrimination’ from ‘black’ staff throughout the council. The minutes of the July 1988 meeting of the Hillingdon Ethnic Group (Hillingdon Ethnic Group 1988f) recorded that:

...concern was expressed about racist graffiti in Hillingdon Council toilets and examples were shown of posters from the civic centre on which pictures of non-’white’ people had been defaced’.

‘Rudeness to Asian staff by white supervisors was also noted’ in the minutes (Hillingdon Ethnic Group 1988f). The meeting of 17th November 1988 (Hillingdon Ethnic Group 1988g) debated the prevalence of ‘discriminatory and patronising language used by white staff towards black staff such as ‘boy’’. Another activist cited a more personal example of racism:

I was the most qualified at my workplace but the person below me who didn’t have my experience and qualifications but was white got the job...The union doesn’t confront the issue of racism at Hillingdon council...it doesn’t support us (HEG 1988g).

The Hillingdon NALGO branch secretary confirmed that despite the appointment of an equal opportunities officer at Hillingdon Council, little had been achieved in combatting racism and exclusionary practices at work:

I don't think the equal opportunity policy has been very good. There is an equal opportunities officer but I think they've only been paying lip-service to them. They're very dodgy on job interviews...when the equal opportunities officer is present at one or two selected interviews, then the interviewers clean up their act just for these interviews. It's still the case that if the face fits, you get the job. There's a long way to go before we get a sound equal opportunities policy at Hillingdon council and get rid of racism.

Most lay activists however, did not concur with their branch secretary's view on this subject and continued to deny the existence of racism at work. One 'white' female steward claimed that: 'I've never heard black workers complain they're job chances have been spoiled by their colour'. Even attempts to measure the extent of disadvantage faced by 'black' workers was considered to be detrimental to harmonious 'race relations' by such stewards. One activist claimed that ethnic monitoring 'could be seen as self-defeating if whites felt blacks were getting jobs because they were black and not because of their ability'.

Perhaps of most concern was the perception of those few remaining activists within the Hillingdon ethnic group that there was a growing antagonism from Hillingdon NALGO

itself. The chair of the Hillingdon ethnic group claimed that: ‘we don’t receive as much money for expenses as we would like when we are organising a meeting, booking a room and for refreshments’. Similarly, another activist claimed that: ‘Hillingdon NALGO is terrible...they don’t fund delegates, do not co-operate, provide no office space or administrative help. The secretaries refuse to type up the minutes of the ethnic minorities group’. Another ‘black’ activist reported how: ‘Hillingdon Nalگو’s branch newspaper even refused to publish ethnic minority group letters saying we haven’t got enough room’ and how he ‘was branded a ‘troublemaker’ and ‘disciplined for being too militant’ when he attempted to secure representation for the group on the branch executive committee.

The ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project in Ealing and Camden NALGO: its strengths and successes

After assessing developments in a branch where opposition to the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project proved to be so extensive that it was still born, I now turn to look again at Camden and Ealing NALGO where the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project flourished to consider to what extent it was able to realise the aims of its leading activists.

Ensuring greater representation on decision-making bodies: the debate over reserved seats

One of the major reasons cited for establishing a self organised group was the belief that it would help to undermine a commonly-held perception amongst 'black' workers that a union was a 'white man's organisation', thereby encouraging greater levels of 'black' participation and representation in union affairs (see also EBN 1987a: 2; CBWG no date a: 3). However, anti-racist activists within both Ealing and Camden NALGO quickly recognised that in a period of neo-liberalism and working class retreat (see Ackers et al 1996), additional measures were required if this objective was to be realised. We saw in Chapter 6, how, in the face of employer attempts to curb informal trade union activity during the early 1970s, there took place a shift in trade union consciousness amongst elements of organised labour that led to the formation of a strong class identity. It was amidst this period of working class militancy, that an element of organised labour also came to recognise that racism weakened the formation of working class solidarity necessary to defeat the employers and therefore took measures to curb it. However, support for 'inter-racial' class action amongst this layer of organised labour was already under great stress by the late 1970s as a result of the failure of the Labour government and 'left' trade union leaders to arrest the decline in their living standards. By May 1979, this current was all but extinguished as evidenced by working class support for the 'authoritarian populist' agenda (Hall 1983) of the incoming Conservative government.

Amidst this rapidly 'moving right show' (Hall 1983) within the working class, 'black' activists and their 'white' allies were faced with the dilemma of how to increase 'black' representation on union bodies in increasingly adverse social circumstances where the current of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity was no longer present to challenge the hold of racist sentiment amongst 'white' workers. A 'black' steward from Ealing NALGO, who was supportive of the 'inter-racial' coalition around a 'black' 'racial formation' project highlighted how the widespread prevalence of racism amongst 'white' workers meant that 'it's going to be one hell of a struggle to get even one or two stewards elected on to the executive because white workers don't want it'.

Recognising that many 'white' workers were unlikely to support the election of 'black' workers as workplace representatives, this 'inter-racial' coalition decided to short-circuit the normal participative forms of democracy used to elect stewards at workplace level by by-passing the rank and file 'white' electorate and demanding reserved seats for 'black' workers on all key decision-making bodies at branch level. Activists within this coalition hoped that this measure would ensure that racism continued to be challenged within the union even during an epoch where support for 'inter-racial' class action had been considerably weakened. As one 'black' activist put it:

I think it is a first step...a starting point. My aim is a situation where you don't need a Black NALGO. At present, reserved places ensure that issues directly affecting black workers are part of the agenda and are raised in the manner that black people want.

In Ealing NALGO, demands for reserved seats were endorsed by the end of 1987 and by early 1988, the 'inter-racial' coalition had secured 'black' representation on all the key decision-making bodies of the branch, including two of the 35 seats on the branch executive committee; one seat each on the service and conditions committee and the general purposes committee. Additionally, the branch agreed to establish a working party to look into the union's policy on racist and sexist harassment with the black members' group having one reserved seat on the committee. To ensure that racism and exclusionary practices at work were also more effectively tackled, the group was allocated a seat on the staffside body - the key negotiating body between the employer, councillors and the union.

In Camden NALGO, the demand for reserved seats made by the 'black' 'racial formation' project and their 'white' supporters was met with opposition from those 'black' and 'white' activists supporting a revolutionary class perspective. They argued that the demand for reserved seats would do little to challenge the racism faced by 'black' workers in their local workplaces and would merely serve the personal interests of those elected. Hence, one 'black' revolutionary steward claimed that whilst 'I agree with black representation on all bodies of the union, I think, in reality, it is very marginal to the major issue of fighting racial harassment' whilst another revolutionary steward argued that 'Most people who've got up that high, have dropped their politics in order to reach that position or soon will be forced to...I'm not convinced of reserved places'. Supporters of the 'black' 'racial formation' project in Camden NALGO were

acutely aware of the dangers associated with the demand for reserved seats but felt they were outweighed by the urgent need to force anti-racism on to the trade union agenda. As one of these activists explained:

I support reserved places but also have misgivings in that there is a danger that a black person gets on to the executive and may not be accountable to rank and file black workers...there is a danger of becoming a 'coconut'. But how else are we going to get racism on to the trade union agenda?

Similarly, for another 'black' activist in Camden NALGO, reserved seats were the only means by which to advance anti-racism within the branch: 'Ultimately, I would have hoped it wasn't necessary but until then it was one way to push forward the issue'. After six months of vigorous debate, Camden NALGO finally endorsed the principle of reserved seats for 'black' workers on all the main decision-making bodies of the union, including two seats on the branch executive committee (BEC).

The 'black' 'racial formation' project and its impact on 'black' worker participation in union activity

The decision to accept reserved places for 'black' workers on all the main decision-making bodies of the local branch coupled with the high profile presence of the black members groups, does appear to have undermined the perception of the union as a 'white' man's organisation and led to a dramatic increase in 'black' participation and

representation in union activities. Prior to the increase in 'black' employment in Ealing Council that began in 1986, the Ealing NALGO branch secretary claimed that 'not more than two per cent of the membership were 'black' of whom only one or two attended branch meetings regularly'. This non-activity on the part of 'black' workers was partly due to the widespread prevalence of racism amongst 'white' activists. According to the Ealing NALGO branch secretary, those 'black' workers that chose to attend were subject to 'great racism, including racist abuse from white workers in the union meeting when they spoke'. However, by 1989, the 'racial' dynamics in the branch had altered with 'black' attendance at union meetings increasing to 20 per cent despite 'black' workers constituting only ten per cent of the total branch membership of 2,460 (Ealing NALGO branch secretary). When probed about whether such increased attendance at union meetings was the result of the growth in 'black' employment in Ealing Council, the branch secretary made clear the significance of the 'black' stewards and the local black members' group:

...we have also had an increase in the number of white workers employed but we haven't seen a corresponding increase in activity amongst them...the climate has changed due to the work of the black workers group.

Similarly, some 'black' workers also began to play a representative role in union affairs. By 1990, in addition to the two seats reserved for representatives nominated by the Ealing Black NALGO group, a further eight 'black' stewards (all of them active in the black workers group) sat on the BEC and were all elected through the normal trade

union procedures. Significantly, this increased participation and representation in the union had demonstrated the importance of ‘black’ self-organisation to many ‘white’ activists:

I didn’t always think that self organisation would work...before I thought it was possible to challenge racism merely by united activity and a commitment. There has been a big change - a number of black representatives have emerged through the black workers groups and I see confidence increasing and we now have black representatives in places where we thought impossible.

Many activists that had been active in Ealing Black NALGO since its formation in 1986 felt that such advances whilst not eradicating racism at work or in the union had at least forced anti-racism on to the local trade union agenda:

...racism can’t be brushed under the carpet anymore. It has increased confidence and the number of stewards who are black. It’s that support structure we have developed. We encourage all our members in the black members’ group to stand for elections...

In Camden NALGO, the anti-racist coalition around the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project had an even greater impact in encouraging ‘black’ representation and participation in local union activity. The Camden NALGO branch secretary explained how by 1990, ‘black’ workers were represented throughout all levels of the union,

including as attendees at union meetings; as shop stewards and branch officers. Data gathered independently from the branch secretary and the chair of the CBWG suggested that 'black' attendance at branch meetings had increased dramatically, particularly since the formation of the CBWG in 1983. Just prior to the establishment of the CBWG, 'black' members comprised five per cent of the total branch membership (120 out of 6,000) and one per cent of those that attended union meetings (four out of 400). However, by 1989, 'black' members comprised ten per cent of the total branch membership (400 out of 4,000) and 25 per cent of all those that attended union meetings (80 out of 300). Hence, from being under-represented at branch meetings, 'black' workers were now substantially over-represented in union activities.

Similarly, in addition to the two places reserved for 'black' workers nominated by the CBWG, 'black' representation of the BEC had increased dramatically with eight of the 47 members and three of the eight branch officers of 'ethnic' origin. According to the branch secretary, these developments had remained 'constant for three years' and he attributed about half of this increase to the activity of the CBWG: '50 per cent of these people came from the black workers group and the others through the normal trade union channels'. As the chair of the CBWG reported, the CBWG has 'strengthened the union by increasing its membership...if it hadn't been for the black workers group, many black workers would not have joined the union'. The advantages of self organisation to the union mainstream were explicitly acknowledged by most of the 'white' activists interviewed in the study including one who contended that:

Locally, changes have been made because self organisation is accepted in NALGO due to the pressure from the black workers group...until self organisation developed in Camden, there were no black workers involved in any level of the union.

The 'black' 'racial formation' project and anti-racist action in the wider society

Importantly, the successes of the 'black' 'racial formation' project within Ealing and Camden NALGO were not restricted to solely combatting racism within the union. It was widely acknowledged that the local black members' group had been the catalyst in mobilising union support against racist violence in the community; in organising support for NALGO members under threat of deportation; and for promoting international issues of concern to the 'black' communities (Labour Research Department 1993). In April 1989, a 50-strong contingent of mainly 'black' workers carried the Ealing NALGO branch banner on a demonstration to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the death of Blair Peach, an anti-racist activist allegedly killed by the police whilst protesting against the National Front in Southall (Black Action 1989a). In Camden NALGO, a 'white' activist not sympathetic to the local 'black' members' group, conceded that: 'the CBWG have raised international issues which would not otherwise have been raised' such as the more favourable stance adopted by the branch towards the Palestinian cause.

Overall, in both branches, the majority of stewards claimed that the ‘black’ ‘racial formation’ project had simultaneously pushed anti-racist action on to the trade union agenda and strengthened the solidarity between ‘white’ and ‘black’ workers. According to the chair of the CBWG, this could be evidenced by the fact that:

The greatest support for the black workers group has been in areas where the black workers group was active...in practice, when people have had experience of black self organisation they don’t resent it and see it as a source of strength of the union.

This was no more clearly demonstrated than in the industrial disputes that took place in Ealing and Camden in 1987 and 1989 respectively. The dominance of ‘black’ socialist activists within the black members’ groups ensured that both ‘black’ and ‘white’ workers were active participants of the dispute over London weighting for all council workers whilst a strike over pay which began in Camden Council during the summer of 1989 showed:

...members of the black workers group argued specifically with black people not to cross the picket lines...they provided additional assistance to the trade union as well as making the strike more solid by arguing that it was important to support the strike...certainly there was no sign that it was a separatist group but rather one that strengthened the union as a whole (Camden NALGO branch secretary).

The chair of the CBWG confirmed that during this strike:

...black workers group representatives worked well with the union's shop stewards...when the 1989 strike took place, the situation was such that black workers were fighting alongside 'white' workers.

The 'black' 'racial formation' project in Ealing and Camden NALGO: its limitations

The preceding section demonstrated how the anti-racist coalition established around a 'black' 'racial formation' project had, in both Camden and Ealing NALGO, contributed to several successes including most importantly a growth in 'black' participation and representation and the construction of an 'inter-racial' solidarity over 'non-racial' issues like improved pay and conditions. However, the 'black' 'racial formation' project was not without its limitations. One such weakness arose from the cross-class nature of the groups. Fairbrother (1989: 188) has shown how the vertical nature of NALGO membership has become more accentuated in recent years amidst the re-structuring of the state labour process. Whilst a majority of NALGO members comprise a 'new state proletariat' working in the lower grades of administrative, clerical and semi-professional work, a minority of NALGO members constitute a 'new middle class' occupying a contradictory class position (Carter 1995) taking

responsibility for supervising and controlling the work of their fellow union members. Consequently, there exists the potential for great conflict between members of the same union articulating antagonistic class interests.

The potential for class conflict within the Ealing and Camden NALGO black members' groups was less than that which existed in the union as a whole because 'black' managers tended to play little part in the activities of the group. However, their presence did sometimes cause problems. The relative success of the cross-class 'racial' alliance over combating racism had lulled some workers of the black members' group into believing that 'racial formation' would be maintained over 'non-racial' issues like securing improved pay and conditions. However, this myth in an imagined 'racial' community was rudely dispelled in the course of several incidents that took place in both Ealing and Camden NALGO during the late 1980s where 'black' managers acted against 'black' workers in defence of their class interests as senior managers. An activist in Ealing Black NALGO described how in 1989, members were shocked, when a 'black' manager in the Community Services Department who was also active within the black members' group, announced that his department was making redundancies, including some 'black' workers who were members of Ealing Black NALGO. These 'black' workers had mistakenly assumed that, as a result of their common commitment to combat racism at work, the 'black' manager would have treated them more favourably over the issue of redundancy. As one of the leading 'black' activists of Ealing Black NALGO observed: 'at the end of the day, he was a manager; and he got rid of them sympathetically but he still got rid of them'.

According to a 'black' activist in Camden NALGO, the class distinctions between 'black' managers and 'black' workers often prohibited the latter from speaking out about management malpractices because they feared that 'black' managers would report such comments back to senior management:

...it is very difficult sitting with black managers as a rank and file black worker talking about management. My experience of black managers is that they do go running off to higher management authorities and squeal about activists.

A 'black' socialist activist in Camden explained how she was increasingly wary of 'black' managers: 'it's a class issue...there are now black managers who attend the CBWG who are disciplining black workers'. A 'black' activist, not active within the CBWG, warned that 'black managers have two heads: one as a manager and one as a black...there are contradictory pressures on them' whilst another claimed that apart from when it came to tackling racism there was little room to build an alliance because: 'they do belong to a different class and there is a class division and they will act accordingly because management stick together'.

Leading activists within both Ealing and Camden Black NALGO claimed that these divisions had worsened as a result of the policies pursued by the local council since the late 1980s:

I think there can be a problem. The Council has brought in a distinct and separate black elite on very high wages which has nothing in common with the vast majority of black workers in low-grade jobs. The black managers operate as managers and not as black people when deciding on job losses...managers first and blacks second. Class is more important and I have seen that happen increasingly.

These developments were leading to a growing antagonism towards 'black' managers leading one activist in the CBWG to argue that 'Some black managers are bastards'. Such growing ill-will towards 'black' managers was consolidated by the actions of 'black' managers to undermine the newly-established 'inter-racial' class solidarity with 'white' workers. I demonstrated earlier in the chapter, how the local black members' groups in Ealing and Camden had strengthened the process of 'inter-racial' solidarity over 'non-racial' issues, including taking industrial action to secure improved pay and conditions. However, further investigation revealed that in the strike over pay that took place in Camden Council over pay during the summer of 1989, the overwhelming majority of 'black' workers supported the strike but most 'black' and 'white' managers continued to cross the picket line and work. Again, 'racial formation' was shown to be unable to extend beyond one part of the 'black' experience at work. In his attempts to cross the picket line, one 'black' manager who was not a member of the CBWG attacked a 'white' picket and was duly expelled from the union (Camden NALGO branch secretary).

Some leading 'black' activists were of the opinion that the 'black' members' groups were being used by 'black' managers as a means to undermine union strength. This was particularly the feeling amongst some stewards in the CBWG where in 1986:

...a black Director of Social Services came to the black workers group meeting and told the meeting that NALGO was a white racist union and that black people should not have any involvement inside the union. As a result, two black stewards resigned from the union...it was designed to weaken the union (black activist).

This account was confirmed by the Camden NALGO branch secretary:

There was a clear impression that the black Director of Social Services tried to work against NALGO through the black workers group... the two stewards were stupid to accept such a judgement from a man who was a member of the Labour Party and had been appointed by senior white managers.

Others were increasingly suspicious about 'black' managers using the black members' group as a vehicle for individual career advancement: 'for some black managers in the CBWG, what equality means is more senior black managers, more black bosses which has nothing in common with the majority of black workers'. Another 'black' activist pointed out that whilst supporting the right of blacks to become managers, the black members' group had to ensure that 'black' workers had no illusions in them:

I've seen the effects of black managers coming into Social Services and they haven't put forward the interests of black workers at all. However, it is important to have black managers but not to have any illusion in them because even these managers have to be appointed by higher managers who are white. Therefore, those black managers who get into these positions have to be the 'right' sort of blacks, 'coconuts'.

In Camden NALGO, the difficulties faced by the black members' group were used by activists advocating a revolutionary class perspective to convince rank and file 'black' workers of the futility of challenging racism through 'racial formation'. One of these activists argued that: 'we see managers as the enemy be they black or white...to make sure workers are doing their jobs efficiently'. Another reinforced the view that some black managers had used the local black members' group as a vehicle for career advancement: 'One of the things that has come out of separate black organisation in NALGO is that a lot of black workers used it as a stepping-stone career-wise...class is very important'. Importantly, there was a strong feeling that the black members' group had concentrated overly on one aspect of the black experience at work - racism - and ignored other issues of equal importance to 'black' workers:

I think there are so many things which are important, they need to be taken as a whole. The fight for better working conditions helps black and white workers...most issues are black and white issues.

The Camden NALGO branch secretary conceded that some of the problems faced by the black members' groups were the result of the unions' vertical structure. He revealed that discussion on how to alleviate these problems had taken place at the highest levels of the branch, and included a proposal advanced by himself that senior managers such as 'Chief Officers and Assistant Chief Officers shouldn't be in the union'. However, he recognised that such a proposal needed to be balanced by the fact that the union needed the large subscription fees contributed by such managers. Additionally, he contended that the vertical structure of the union also had in-built strengths, especially when undertaking industrial action because: 'you have the ability to call out middle management which effectively makes it impossible for the Council to carry out its services'.

Inability to implement an equal opportunities policy in an era of neo-liberalism

The 'black' 'racial formation' project had some undoubted successes in combatting racism at work in Ealing and Camden NALGO. Most notable was the case involving Lucille Guichard, a kitchen assistant, who claimed in 1983, that she had been passed over for promotion and retained in the lowest paid job in the kitchen since she began work for Camden council in 1968 because of the operation of racism and exclusionary practices. At the same time, 'white' workers, recruited after Guichard, and less qualified than her, had been promoted. She accused her supervisors of 'personal prejudice and discriminatory practices' and of depriving her of bonus and overtime

payments. On one occasion, a toy monkey was placed on her chair as a 'joke'. She described how, as a result of such racism: 'the years I have spent at Greenwood have been some of the most soul-destroying of my life when more than once I came close to a breakdown' (CBWG 1984: 5). Despite the extensive evidence in support of her case, the local Law Centre, Camden NALGO, and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) all refused to take the case forward. Lucille Guichard argued that 'The worst thing was that there was just no-one you could turn to - No one would listen - you were just left to stew on your own (CBWG 1984: 5-6). Finally, she approached the CBWG, who agreed to take on the case. The chair of the CBWG who was responsible for taking the case forward reported how:

...we negotiated an enquiry and two and half years later it showed that everything she said was true...confidential evidence showed that there had been incorrect evidence used against her alleged bad time keeping when she had never been late for work in her life.

In October 1986, and as a direct result of the work of the CBWG, Lucille Guichard was awarded £24,000 in compensation (CBWG no date a).

By the late 1980s, however, there was a growing frustration amongst both 'black' and 'white' activists about the lack of effective action in redressing racism and exclusionary practices at work. Equal opportunities policies, once synonymous with radical Labour administrations committed to opening up local government to 'black' workers (see

Young and Connolly 1981), were now used by these same administrations as a cloak to hide behind when they were accused of taking insufficient action to combat racism. One 'black' activist in Ealing NALGO claimed that:

Institutions have become wise to black people...Equal opportunities aren't even a step forward; its refined racism and prejudice in a much more sophisticated way. [It's] let employers off the hook. When asked "why don't they employ more black workers at senior levels", they reply, "black workers don't apply but we have an equal opportunities policy; we don't discriminate". The real issue is not equal opportunities but racism; its only allowed black workers to come into the periphery.

Similarly, a 'black' activist in the CBWG, whilst acknowledging the importance of equal opportunity policies in opening up local state employment; felt they had become ineffective and did little to challenge the discriminatory practices faced by 'black' workers:

I think equal opportunity policies are positive and have been a step forward in opening up areas of employment to black workers that were previously closed to them. But I would also say that they have not been effectively implemented...black workers still dominate the lower grades and are more likely to be disciplined than white workers.

The chair of the CBWG confirmed such sentiments when he argued:

On the whole, they [equal opportunity policies] have been window dressing. But they have opened up the door which black workers need to push through. Before, that door just wasn't there or was there with a sign which said, 'No entry'.

The primary factors responsible for the slow-down in anti-racist activity in local government have already been discussed in Chapter 7 but included most notably the introduction of rate-capping legislation to curb local government spending in left-wing Labour-run local authorities (Ouseley 1990; Solomos and Ball 1990). The Camden NALGO branch secretary who had held office throughout the 1980s argued that:

...between 1982 and 1986 there was strong desire to push equal opportunity policies. It became an acceptable part of the culture for managers and they would look bad if they didn't recruit and promote black workers. This was largely because of the political line taken by the left Labour council that they were anti-racist. Therefore, there was a change of policy. Whether they were convinced of it or not is another matter...this was shown in 1986 when they reverted back to old-style policies due to the weakening of local Labour authorities through rate-capping and the move to the right within the Labour Party which accepted the need to implement cutbacks. Equal opportunities were the first to be cut.

Amidst such adverse circumstances, and, despite the presence of ‘black’ representatives on the main negotiating bodies, Ealing and Camden NALGO branches were forced to prioritise the defence of ‘bread and butter’ trade union issues like job protection and consequently, ensuring the effective implementation of the equal opportunities policy became a lesser priority. A ‘black’ activist on the negotiating body in Ealing council argued that:

In the Departmental Committee of shop stewards, which all workplaces representatives attend, positive action is always on the agenda, but it is hardly ever discussed because we get bogged down in regrading claims, grievances, etc. The equal opportunities policy is there to appease people.

Despite the lack of effective action to combat racism and exclusionary practices since the late 1980s (see also Ball and Solomos 1990), the growing threat of job cuts and a weakening of pay and conditions, meant that the mere existence of an equal opportunities policy and a commitment to combatting racism at work, became a hotly contested issue amongst parts of the ‘white’ NALGO membership; with many highly antagonistic towards it and interpreting it as offering favourable treatment towards ‘black’ workers. According to an activist in the Ealing Black NALGO, such a reaction was unsurprising bearing in mind that:

The Council has never explained what an equal opportunity policy means in practice. Neither they, the union nor any of us in the black members' group have gone to white workers to explain what it means...no wonder some of them think it is giving jobs to black people unfairly.

Under such changing circumstances, anti-racist activists - including some of those who supported self organisation and nearly all of those that articulated a revolutionary class perspective - were increasingly supportive of the view that such racist sentiment could only be combatted through a change of strategy, including the undertaking of collective action, which would secure greater resources for all, irrespective of 'race' and thereby undermine the economic basis of racism. Hence, as a 'white' revolutionary suggested:

[We] need to fight for more resources to make policies effective...[we] can't just say we are an anti-racist council and then implement cutbacks to housing stock which increases racism. We need to fight for more resources if we are to be anti-racist.

Conclusions

Both Gilroy (1982; 1987) and Miles (1984; 1987a; 1993) have written about how 'black' self organisation ought to be conceptualised, and in particular, its relationship to class-based mobilisations. It was shown earlier in Chapters 2 and 3 that both writers

conceptualised such activity as a shift away from class-based politics. Instead, this study has shown that self organisation in trade unions represented a class fraction's struggle against racism and was key to the formation of an 'inter-racial' working class solidarity that developed during periods of acute class struggle. Their inability to adequately conceptualise self organisation partly lies in their failure to undertake a detailed assessment of the politics and identity of such groups. In redressing this weakness through a critical investigation of developments in three local branches in NALGO, it was established that self organised groups were informed by not one ideological perspective as both Gilroy (1987) and Miles (1984) assumed but two: socialism and black nationalism.

In both Ealing and Camden NALGO branches, support for socialist activists and their vision of the 'black' racial formation project outweighed support for the nationalist vision of a 'black' racial formation project. It was the strength of support for the socialist perspective and its commitment to the traditional principles of trade unionism that proved decisive in persuading about half the 'white' stewards in each branch to lend their support to the local black members' group.

Opposition to 'black' self-organisation was mounted on two fronts: whilst those activists who supported a revolutionary class perspective acknowledged the existence of working class racism but disagreed with the strategy of 'racial formation' proposed to combat it, those activists that adhered to a colour-blind perspective denied the existence of racism altogether, claimed that all members were subject to the same

problems, and thereby questioned the very legitimacy of the 'black' 'racial formation' project. It was the ideological hold exercised by this colour-blind perspective over nearly all the 'white' stewards and about half the 'black' activists that primarily ensured that the 'black' members' group in Hillingdon NALGO was still-born and racism continued unchallenged.

The evidence discussed in this chapter also challenges some of the assertions made by Modood (1988; 1992; 1994) regarding the re-configuration of anti-racist politics in 1980s and 1990s England. First, anti-racist action around the identity 'black' and encompassing people of South Asian and Caribbean descent was not replaced by 'ethnic' or 'religious-based' anti-racist action as Modood (1994) claims but continued to co-exist alongside it. Second, and significantly, racism was more effectively tackled employing the anti-racist strategy of the 'black' 'racial formation' project than when it fractured into its constituent 'ethnic' parts (e.g. Hillingdon NALGO) as Modood (1988; 1992; 1994) advocates.

Of course, the pursuit of an anti-racist strategy based on the construction of an imagined 'racial' community was not without its limitations, but overall, there is little doubt that during a period which saw organised labour in retreat and the decline of a strong class identity, the establishment of an 'inter-racial' coalition around a 'black' 'racial formation' project ensured that anti-racist action remained on the trade union agenda.

PART FOUR

ASSESSMENT

9 Conclusions

Towards an alternative conceptual framework for understanding racist and anti-racist action in trade unions

In this study, I demonstrated that existing theoretical frameworks for understanding racist and anti-racist action in trade unions were conceptually flawed. Black radical theorists such as Sivanandan (1982), Howe (1978) and Gilroy (1987) argue that ‘white’ organised labour instituted exclusionary practices against migrant labour from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean because they derived economic and ideological benefits from doing so. Arising from this critique, these writers drew two important conclusions regarding anti-racist political practice. First, the racist actions of trade unionists demonstrated unequivocally that ‘white’ organised labour could no longer be viewed as an agency that was capable of engaging in ‘inter-racial’ class action to combat racism. Second, an alternative agency was identified as capable of organising effective resistance against racism: the ‘black’ working class comprising people of ‘South Asian’ and ‘Caribbean’ descent.

This study showed that the black radical critique is built on the mistaken assumption that the primary function of a trade union is to represent the interests of the whole working class (Sivanandan 1976; Sivanandan 1982). Rather, trade unions are organisations whose primary role is to defend the interests of their members (Hyman

1972; Kelly 1988) through the negotiation of improved pay and conditions. Further, these bodies carry out this task firmly within the confines of the capitalist social formation, that is, they are informed by a reformist, not a revolutionary will (Lenin 1976; Luxemburg 1994; Gramsci 1994; Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988).

To advance this aim of improving the pay and conditions of their members within the confines of the capitalist social formation, British trade unions have available to them a range of strategies that will not only defend the economic interests of their members against capital, but will do so at the expense of groups of workers not in the industry. Herein lies the basis of an explanation that can be developed about why trade unions engage in racism and exclusionary practices.

Since trade unions are not socialist organisations imbued with a revolutionary class consciousness that places emphasis on working class solidarity but rather sectionalist organisations imbued with a reformist trade union consciousness, they do, on occasions, employ exclusionary practices against those elements of the working class which they consider to be an economic threat to their members. Such action is not motivated by a recognition that it will result in economic gains at the expense of other groups of workers (although marginal economic gain may be a by-product of such action) but rather marks an attempt to protect what little they have in a capitalist social formation that can never fully guarantee their economic security. Whilst such exclusionary practices may not be in the ‘true’ or ‘real’ interests of this element of the working class in so far as they would stand to economically benefit more through

united action (see Du Bois 1969; Reich 1971; Perlo 1975; Symanski 1976), according to the limited outlook that motivates trade union behaviour, that is, the defence of member interests within capitalism, they often come to the conclusion that exclusionary practices represent the best means by which to pursue this specific goal.

The theoretical framework that Miles and Phizacklea (1977b; 1978; see also Phizacklea and Miles 1980) employ to analyse racist and anti-racist action in trade unions is more robust than the black radical theory of trade union racism. Particular strengths include their recognition that the primary function of trade unions is to represent the interests of their members and *not* the whole working class and that the expression of trade union racism has its origins in their reformist outlook that subordinates international working class interests to national ones (Miles and Phizacklea 1977b).

However, Miles and Phizacklea (1977b; 1978) are unable to accommodate within their theoretical framework, the anti-racist action pursued by the TUC and affiliated unions which they themselves first identified (Miles and Phizacklea 1978). The roots of their failure to theorise such anti-racist action lies in their inflexible association of trade union consciousness with a restricted class consciousness and reformism, and a revolutionary class consciousness with radical social change (Phizacklea and Miles 1980). This understanding of trade union consciousness leads them to employ an equally inflexible dualism where racist action is equated with a trade union consciousness and reformism and anti-racist action with a revolutionary consciousness

and radical social change. Neo-Marxist analyses of trade unionism (see for example Anderson 1977; Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988) suggest that the Leninist concept of trade union consciousness masks a range of different forms of reformist class consciousness at work, of which the two most important include a sectionalist and corporatist consciousness (Kelly 1988). A sectionalist consciousness arises where workers identify themselves and their interests primarily with a section of their class with whom they have an immediate interest. This may encompass only those colleagues at their immediate place of work, also referred to as a factory consciousness (see Beynon 1984), or it may include all individuals that work in their industry. A corporate consciousness is where workers identify themselves and their interests with the corporate body and the interests of the working class as a whole within capitalism (Kelly 1988).

This alternative conceptualisation of working class consciousness at work creates the theoretical space to explain both racist and anti-racist action in trade unions whilst maintaining an understanding of them as essentially reformist organisations whose primary aim is to defend member interests within the confines laid down by the capitalist social formation. For example, the formation of a corporatist consciousness where the pursuit of sectional member interests is perceived to coincide with the pursuit of aggregate working class interests would be compatible with the development of 'inter-racial' class action. An important question arising from this discussion is under what sorts of economic, political and ideological conditions would such a consciousness be likely to develop?

In answering this question the work of the German Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg (1994) is especially pertinent. Luxemburg (1994: 153-218) argued that there were phases in the class struggle between capital and labour where the economic demands of workers took on an explicitly political dimension and opened up the possibility of more radical action. In particular, during those periods where the state played a highly interventionist role against strike action, Luxemburg (1994) observed that it helped to cohere the working class and led to the formation of a militant trade union consciousness. Applying these important insights to the study of racist and anti-racist action in trade unions opens up the theoretical possibility that during periods of intense class struggle, a process of ‘inter-racial’ class solidarity could emerge which negates the racism that normally inhibits the formation of such action.

A sectionalist trade union consciousness and racist action in trade unions

The usefulness of these theoretical and conceptual insights was substantiated by utilising the proposed framework to re-assess events between 1945-79 (a period which black radical theorists use to advance their theoretical arguments), to see what new light could be shed on the relationship between organised labour and the ‘black’ worker. It was demonstrated that the black radical claim of the racist actions of trade unionists being motivated by the economic benefits they accrued from doing so needs to be qualified. It was mainly during periods where a weak class identity (i.e. a

sectionalist trade union consciousness) prevailed such as in the 1950s and 1960s that trade unionists employed racism and exclusionary practices to restrict the employment of 'black' labour to defend their economic position.

The rapid expansion of the British capitalist social formation during the two decades that followed World War Two augured in a period of relative peace in the industrial and political spheres. The prevalence of tight labour markets meant trade unions found themselves in a strong bargaining position vis-a-vis the employers. Through collective bargaining and the use of exclusionary practices, many trade unions successfully extracted favourable terms and conditions for their members. The employers and the state acceded to these trade union demands without much resistance recognising that they were unlikely to harm profits in a period of rapid capitalist accumulation. However, the extraction of real wage increases through agreed procedural arrangements like collective bargaining and exclusionary practices led to the formation of a sectionalist trade union consciousness where large elements of organised labour identified their interests narrowly with those colleagues at their immediate place of work or industry.

Significantly, the prevalence of this weak class identity failed to challenge the ideology of racism that was widely prevalent across all sections of British society. When post-war migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean began to arrive in England, the racism of slavery and colonialism was over-determined by the development of an indigenous racism of which a central component was that migrant

labour represented a source of cheap labour (Joshi and Carter 1984). Amidst these circumstances, in those industries where ‘black’ workers were perceived to represent a direct threat to the economic security of the ‘white’ worker, trade unionists employed exclusionary practices motivated by racism to restrict the employment of ‘black’ labour.

A corporate trade union consciousness and the formation of ‘inter-racial’ class action against racism

Black radical writers (see Sivanandan 1976; 1977; 1982; Gilroy 1982; 1987) incorrectly assume such trade union racism remained a permanent feature of the English industrial relations landscape during the period under discussion. However, the evidence suggests that in periods characterised by an intense class struggle and increasing strike action, the formation of a strong class identity (i.e. a corporate trade union consciousness) helped to undermine the prevalence of racism in trade unions and led to the development of an ‘inter-racial’ class solidarity where the advancement of sectional member interests were seen by large elements of organised labour to coincide with the advancement of the interests of the aggregate working class.

This is precisely what took place during the late 1960s and 1970s. Accompanying the onset of organised ‘black’ resistance to racism and exclusionary practices was growing employer and state concern at the poor productivity of British industry and their

identification of informal trade union activity as the prime cause behind it. The resultant state intervention in labour-employer relations led to a dramatic re-configuration of the class struggle. With the tripartite consensus coming under strain amidst the pressure of conflicting class interests, rank and file workers increasingly came to recognise that their material interests could no longer be secured through the operation of collective bargaining and the use of exclusionary practices alone. As a result, by the late 1960s, the strike weapon became an increasingly popular means by which to defend worker interests.

These developments contributed to an uneven yet significant shift beyond the sectionalist trade union consciousness of the 1950s and 1960s to the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness where the pursuit of sectional member interests were perceived to coincide with the interests of the aggregate working class. Critical to the organisation of this resistance were socialist trade unionists who had a political outlook that was internationalist in character. The formation of a corporate trade union consciousness amongst key elements of organised labour was also reflected at a national trade union leadership level where the right-wing labour aristocracy, no longer able to deliver material gains to their members through national negotiations with employers, either shifted to the left, or, found themselves replaced by left-wing trade union leaders (Kelly 1988: 109).

The formation of a strong class identity amidst this wave of industrial unrest involving large numbers of the ‘white’ and ‘black’ working class, whilst constituting a necessary

pre-condition, was not sufficient in and of itself to bring about a rejection of racism. There is no concrete 'law' which states that periods of acute class struggle will be accompanied by anti-racist activity as many reductionists of the Marxist persuasion claim (see Alexander 1987; Callinicos 1993). Rather the importance of the growing wave of worker insurgency lay in its ability to create a more favourable ideological terrain for the development of 'inter-racial' class action, including against racism. However, it required the fear of far-right influence in the trade unions, exposed during the Imperial Typewriters dispute in 1973 (Miles and Phizacklea 1978) for many 'white' socialist activists to finally recognise that racism and fascism divided the working class - a feature that they could no longer afford to tolerate if working class interests against state and employer intervention were to be successfully defended.

By the mid-1970s, a re-configuration of the relationship between organised labour and the 'black' worker was underway: the TUC, driven by activist pressure from individual unions such as NALGO (see Chapter 7) began to instigate policies and practices that sought to challenge the impact of racism and exclusionary practices in the trade unions and outside. However, this was not just 'top-down' anti-racism: the most visible manifestation of 'inter-racial' working class solidarity and the rejection of racist ideologies took place between 1976 and 1978 when thousands of 'white' (and 'black') workers including miners, dockers, transport workers and post office workers came out to support 'South Asian' women on strike at the Grunwick film processing plant. The formation of this current of 'white' anti-racism in the trade unions also manifested itself outside of the trade unions and the workplace with many large trade unions

affiliating and offering physical and financial support to the formation of the Anti-Nazi League - an organisation established to combat the growth of organised fascist activity in Britain (see Chapters 6 and 7).

As well as deepening our theoretical understanding of the economic, political and ideological circumstances under which the TUC altered its policy towards 'black' workers, this study demonstrated that the conclusions drawn by black radical theorists regarding the possibility of 'inter-racial' class action are in need of major modification. Because of their conceptually flawed framework, they are unable to grasp that the response of trade unions towards migrant labour is contingent on a wider set of social relations and the types of strategies they use in defence of their members' interests. This response cannot be pre-determined or predicted in advance as black radical theorists do, but has to be concretely analysed in each historical epoch. By failing to do this, black radical theorists end up offering an ahistorical exposition of trade union racism which, when faced with evidence which directly contradicts their thesis, they end up ignoring (see Gilroy 1982; 1987 on Grunwick) or negating its significance (see Sivanandan 1982; Ramdin 1987 on Grunwick).

It is only by adopting a conceptual framework that situates the study of trade union racism in the role played by trade unions in the capitalist mode of production that one can go on to accurately identify and comprehend the dynamics of social change. The results of doing so, as this study has demonstrated, are that black radical theorists have been rather hasty in writing off the 'white' working class as an agency capable of

overcoming the ideology of racism and acting in solidarity with ‘black’ workers. Instead, the English working class continues to remain an agency capable of challenging racism under a particular set of economic, political and ideological conditions. It will continue to remain so, in theory, as long as the capitalist social formation remains in existence. The form and manner in which it will do so in practice has to be the subject of empirical investigation.

Racism, anti-racism and the class struggle before ‘race relations’: the importance of a historical perspective

Another limitation of black radical accounts is their narrow conceptualisation of racism in Britain with the negative signification of a ‘non-white’ skin colour and the post-1945 migration from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean. There is an implicit assumption within their thesis that there was no racism (or anti-racism for that matter) in Britain before ‘race relations’ and the docking of the Empire Windrush in 1948 (Sivanandan 1982; Gilroy 1982; Gilroy 1987). The work of Robert Miles (see 1982; 1989; 1993) is particularly useful in countering such an impression. Importantly, he has demonstrated the importance of adopting a historical focus to the study of racism and of going beyond operationalising an understanding of ‘race’ (be it biologically or socially constructed) that is inextricably tied to ‘non-white’ social groups. This has enabled him to demonstrate that the two major social groups that were subject to the processes of racialisation and racism during the nineteenth century were ‘white’: the

Irish and the Jews. Additionally, in recent years, social historians (see Fryer 1984; Ramdin 1987; Holmes 1988) have unequivocally identified the presence of a 'non-white' population in Britain going back to the times of the Roman invasion, with a sizable 'non-white' population having been resident in Britain since the late sixteenth century. Like the migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean that were to follow during the second half of the twentieth century, they too were subjected to the processes of racialisation and racism (Panayi 1994).

However, even the analysis offered by Miles and the social historians tends to be rather one-dimensional and rarely extends beyond establishing that such social groups were the subject of racism and racist violence. Whilst some attempt is made to analyse the wider social relations which may have helped to fashion such a racist response, these authors leave the impression that racism was a constant in relation to time and space with little consideration given to whether the process of racialisation was prevalent across the whole of the English population; whether there was resistance to this racism amongst parts of the English population; and, under what social conditions such resistance manifested itself.

Utilising the analytical framework employed to assess events between 1945-79, this study found evidence of both racism and anti-racism in trade unions before 'race relations'. Again, the articulation of these currents was directly related to the wider sets of social relations and in particular, the strategies employed by trade unions to defend their members' interests within a given set of economic, political and ideological

circumstances. Importantly, since trade unionism rarely extended beyond a small minority of skilled workers throughout much of the nineteenth century (Hobsbawm 1990), a second current of unorganised working class racism was also identified and its origins analysed.

When it came to analysing the social circumstances under which the articulation of racism in trade unions manifested itself during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, it was found that there were strong continuities with the two decades that followed World War Two. The following conditions were consistently identified. First, trade unions found themselves in a strong bargaining position compared to the employers as a result of the prevalence of tight labour market conditions. Under these circumstances, rank and file labour could deploy exclusionary practices to ensure that the price of labour of workers already working in the factory was maintained. Critical to the success of such forms of action were the labour aristocracy of trade union leaders who emerged for the first time in British trade union history during the middle decades of the nineteenth century (Pelling 1987; Morton 1994). This social layer came to occupy an intermediate position in social relations between labour and capital and their power and authority as negotiators was rooted in the continued maintenance of a stable and orderly relationship between their members and members of the capitalist class (Hyman 1972; Anderson 1977).

Second, the employers and the state tended to accede to trade union demands without much resistance because they had relatively little impact on the productivity and profits

of British capital during periods of rapid economic expansion. Under such circumstances, a highly sectionalist trade union consciousness evolved where workers in one factory showed little concern for groups of workers in other factories. With overt class conflict and a strong class identity at a premium, other ideologies, including racism, exercised a great hold over the working class and were able to affect and maintain discontinuities in the working class. Hence, on those occasions where migrant labour was perceived to threaten the economic security of the 'white' worker, trade unions took action to restrict their entry into skilled jobs.

As I mentioned earlier in the discussion, a second current of racism was also identified within the working class throughout much of the nineteenth century. These workers tended to work in unskilled jobs where the supply of labour regularly exceeded demand. Their weak bargaining position vis-a-vis the employers ensured these workers were unable to maintain any form of union organisation, leaving them highly vulnerable to economic exploitation. This vulnerability was exacerbated when migrant labour was recruited to work in these jobs for allegedly cheaper rates of pay. With little sense of class identification and no means of collective defence, groups of English unskilled workers drew on the racisms prevalent in nineteenth century England and subjected migrant workers that were in direct economic competition with them to much violence (Miles 1982; Thompson 1991). Such acts of racist violence were evident throughout much of the nineteenth century, but took on a particularly pernicious form during the first two decades of the nineteenth century when the banning of trade unions

coupled with the arrival of Irish migrant labour left unskilled English workers working on the roads and railways in a highly vulnerable economic position.

Similarly, during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, Jewish migrants, who had recently escaped the pogroms of eastern Europe found themselves subject to racist violence from unskilled English workers working in the garment and other unorganised trades in the east end of London, Manchester and Leeds.

These findings strongly contradict the orthodox Marxist analysis of writers like Cox (1970), Alexander (1987) and Callinicos (1993) who contend that racism represents a capitalist plot to divide the working class and instead confirms Miles' (1989) conclusions that the articulation of working class racism represents an attempt by that class to make sense of its everyday experiences. Of course, once such racist divisions were in place within the working class, there is little doubt that employers took full advantage of them to further the interests of capital.

Importantly, this study also established that racist action in trade unions and the working class more generally was interspersed with periods of 'inter-racial' class solidarity which suppressed the racism that was so widely prevalent during this period. This 'inter-racial' class action manifested itself during periods of acute class struggle involving sustained bouts of strike activity by large numbers of organised labour where the defence of sectional working class interests came to be perceived as being

indivisible with the defence of the interests of the aggregate working class. Under such social conditions, where the construction of a strong working class identity was paramount if collective action was to be successful, racism, as an ideology that structured attitudes and behaviour, lost its purchase and was negated. One of the most important examples of such 'inter-racial' class action was evidenced during the period of the new unionism in the 1880s and early 1890s where unskilled English, Jewish and Irish workers united to advance their common class interests against capital (Buckman 1980; Williams 1980).

Human agency and its role in understanding racist and anti-racist collective action

It would be to fall into the trap of economic reductionism if I contended that the relative strength of anti-racist ideas and actions was solely dependent upon the formation of a strong class identity. Such a statement would fail to account for the factor of human agency in moulding social circumstances. Instead, the central thrust of this study is that whilst the formation of a strong class identity constituted the necessary ideological terrain upon which 'white' workers began to look more favourably towards ideas associated with working class solidarity, it required the intervention of two sets of human forces for this process to transform itself into 'inter-racial' class action. The first of these sets of forces were migrant workers and their English-born children who, in the absence of solidarity action from 'English' workers during periods of weak class

identification, employed the strategy of self organisation to combat racism and exclusionary practices. However, during periods of acute class struggle, self organisation also served to highlight the problem of working class racism to those activists leading the militant class action. This second set of human forces, the socialist activists, recognised that it was only by combatting working class racism that such militant class action was likely to achieve its aims. Hence, during periods of acute class struggle, anti-racist action became synonymous with the aim of advancing working class interests, leading to the formation of an ‘inter-racial’ working class solidarity.

We have already seen how, in the mid-1970s, during the high-point of militant class struggle, the anti-racist action of ‘black’ workers forced leading trade union activists into recognising that racism had to be combatted if the aims of this wave of worker insurgency were to be realised. A more distant example of the formation of an ‘inter-racial’ class solidarity took place over a century ago when, informed by the Jewish-led resistance against poor working conditions, English socialist activists came to recognise that the drive to organise the mass of unskilled workers would only be successful if the racism of English workers was overcome (Buckman 1980; Williams 1980).

These examples of the role played by self organisation in acute periods of class struggle have important implications for existing debates about self organisation and its relationship to class-based politics (see Phizacklea and Miles 1980; CCCS 1982; Miles 1984; Gilroy 1987). On the one hand, black radical theorists like Paul Gilroy (1987)

have argued that self-organisation marked the death-knell of the Marxian project of ‘inter-racial’ class agency, leading him to suggest that independent ‘black’ action could be more usefully conceptualised as constituting a form of new social movement. On the other hand, Miles and Phizacklea (1980), whilst recognising that self organisation represented an attempt by ‘black’ workers to combat racism in the absence of ‘white’ working class support, still go on to imply that such action represented a shift away from class-based politics.

This study demonstrated that both sets of analyses were flawed and failed to accurately assess the significance of self organisation. Self organisation was neither a manifestation of a new social movement (self organisation has been a feature of the organised labour movement since its inception) nor did it represent a move away from class-based politics. Instead, self organisation was an expression of one working class fraction’s struggle against racism which during periods of acute class struggle, became the precursor to the formation of an anti-racist ‘inter-racial’ working class solidarity.

The fractional character of working class racism and anti-racism

At this point, it becomes necessary to offer the following qualifications to the central thrust of the thesis advanced to date. It must be continually borne in mind that the working class does not exist as a unitary ideological and structural entity in capitalist social formations (Hyman 1972). The labour process imparts on it a fractional character which results in the development of an uneven consciousness at work. The study demonstrated how, even during the most acute phases of the class struggle over the

past two hundred years, where large numbers of organised labour moved towards a trade union consciousness that emphasised a strong class identity, there remained an equally large element of organised labour (and even more of unorganised labour) who remained unaffected by such activity with no change in their restricted trade union consciousness.

The implications of this were that if an 'inter-racial' working class solidarity was to be constructed and racism to be combatted, migrant workers had to be located in those industries where 'white' workers were engaged in militant class action and moving towards the formation of a strong working class identity. If they were not located in these industries, it was likely they would continue to be subjected to racism and exclusionary practices, even during periods of acute class struggle. This was no more clearly illustrated than during the 1910-22 strike wave, a period commonly accepted as representing the closest Britain has come to a radical working class-led social transformation of society (see Rosenberg 1987; Kelly 1988). Whilst large numbers of skilled organised labour were engaged in militant strike activity leading to the formation of a corporate trade union consciousness, the majority of migrant workers found themselves continuing to be subject to racism and exclusionary practices in the seafaring industry where 'white' workers remained unaffected by such developments.

Even in circumstances where migrant workers found themselves located in those industries where the working class developed a strong class identity and racism began to be combatted, it still did not prevent the articulation of racism in industries

unaffected by the unrest. It is only by recognising the fractional character of the working class in capitalist social formations and the uneven shift in trade union consciousness that arises from it, that one can then go on to explain how one element of the working class, comprising the large trade unions and the TUC, shifted towards combatting racism in the 1970s, whilst another part of the working class, comprising the unorganised and weakly organised, mobilised in support of the racist and fascist National Front (Husbands 1983).

Second, it should be emphasised that I am by no means suggesting that the formation of an ‘inter-racial’ class solidarity marked a move towards a revolutionary class consciousness amongst trade unionists. Hence, whilst many of the activists that led this strike action articulated a revolutionary socialist perspective and were members of political parties that were committed to a radical transformation of society (Hyman 1972; Kelly 1988), the majority of rank and file labour offered their support to these socialist activists for largely instrumental concerns, namely, the pursuit of improved pay and conditions. Amidst the changing economic conditions of the late 1960s and 1970s, parts of organised labour came to the recognition that collective bargaining and the use of exclusionary practices was unlikely to guarantee their economic security and consequently transferred their allegiance to socialist activists who argued that strike action was a more effective means by which to pursue this aim. Hence, the rank and file worker participated in ‘inter-racial’ class action on the grounds that working class divisions, including those caused by racism, were harmful to the effective pursuit of

their instrumental concerns, not because they believed that anti-racist class action was an essential pre-requisite to the creation of a new social order.

The disjuncture in this alliance can be demonstrated by considering political developments during the 1920s and 1970s. Whilst these two periods witnessed socialist and communist activists playing a leading role in the waves of industrial unrest, rank and file allegiance to these activists remained firmly limited to the economic sphere as demonstrated by the minute increase in membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1920s (Hinton and Hyman 1975) and the Communist Party and the International Socialists in the 1970s (Kelly 1988). Part of the explanation for this failure to translate working class support from the economic sphere to the political sphere lay in the chameleon-like ability of the labour aristocracy (the Labour Party and trade union leaders) to accommodate themselves to shifts in working class opinion by either replacing right-wing members with left-wing members or by right-wing members shifting to the left (Miliband 1987). The outcome of these developments was that during acute periods of class struggle, 'white' workers allegiance to 'race' was indeed negated and replaced by an allegiance to a class identity. However, it remained the case that the pursuit of their objective class interests was carried out firmly within the confines of the capitalist social formation.

‘Black’ self organisation and anti-racist action in an era of neo-liberalism

It has already been established that in periods of less acute class struggle and weak class identity, racism re-asserted its hold over much of organised labour. It would be natural to assume then that this is what would take place during the 1980s and 1990s where the employers, ably supported by the state, managed to undermine the militant trade unionism of the 1970s. Instead, a cursory glance at developments in most large trade unions affiliated to the TUC revealed that anti-racism remained firmly on the trade union agenda. To establish how this situation came to pass, I undertook an assessment of developments in one trade union - NALGO.

The study found that the 1980s were witness to a remarkable set of political developments relating to racism, never before witnessed in trade unions. In previous periods of weak class identity, racism tended to be combatted by migrant workers through self organisation with ‘white’ activists and workers either remaining indifferent towards it or being responsible for its articulation. However, during the 1980s, the militant self-activity of ‘black’ workers convinced a significant layer of ‘white’ activists, especially in NALGO branches in the Greater London area to support self organisation and establish an organisational structure for ‘black’ workers.

Both Gilroy (1982; 1987) and Miles (1984; 1987a; 1993) have written about the way in which ‘black’ self organisation ought to be conceptualised, and in particular, its relationship to class-based mobilisations. It was shown earlier that both writers

conceptualised such action as representing a shift away from class-based politics, with Gilroy (1987) going so far as to re-conceptualise such action as constituting a new social movement. Instead, this study showed that self organisation in trade unions represented one class fraction's struggle against racism and was key to the formation of an 'inter-racial' working class solidarity that developed during periods of acute class struggle. Their inability to adequately conceptualise self organisation partly lies in their failure to undertake a detailed assessment of the politics and identity of such groups. In redressing this weakness through a critical investigation of developments in three local branches in NALGO, it was established that self organised groups were informed by two competing ideological perspectives and not one as both Gilroy and Miles assume.

On the one hand, there were those 'black' activists who were socialists and who advocated the establishment of black members' groups for three reasons: first, because 'black' activists were more likely to challenge racism than 'white' activists; second, because it would undermine the perception of the union as a 'white man's organisation', encourage greater 'black' worker participation and representation in union activities, and thereby make the union more representative of all its members; and, thirdly, because it would act as a catalyst and force a layer of 'white' activists to combat racism. On the other hand, there were 'black' activists who were black nationalists, who advocated the establishment of black members' groups because they retained little optimism in the ability of 'white' activists, especially 'white' workers, to overcome the ideological hold of racism and unite with 'black' workers.

In both Ealing and Camden NALGO branches, support for the socialist activists and their vision of 'black' self-organisation far outweighed support for the nationalist vision of 'black' self-organisation. It was this strength of support and the commitment of black socialist activists to the traditional principles of trade unionism that proved decisive in persuading about half the 'white' stewards in each branch to lend their support to the local black members' group.

The impact of the 'black' 'racial formation' project at a national level in NALGO was less effective. Whilst it was clear that support for 'black' self-organisation was not founded on a desire for separatism but rather a recognition that in an era of weak class identification, many 'white workers' would be reluctant to take the sorts of action that were necessary to combat racism effectively, an important implication of this proposed strategy was that the role of 'whites' in general and the NEC in particular, would have been negated to that of ratifying and supporting unconditionally the anti-racist policies and tactics devised by 'black' activists. Despite demonstrating a personal commitment to challenging racism, this policy was unacceptable to the NEC. They were acutely aware of the fact that they derived their authority and power from their membership (of whom the majority were 'white') and that support for 'black' self-organisation was likely to provoke a racist backlash from some of these 'white' members which would jeopardise this authority. Consequently, the NEC advanced an alternative means of combatting racism that was based on the twin ideological considerations of ensuring that whilst 'black' workers had an important say in anti-racist policy formulation, the resultant policies and strategies had to secure majority 'white' support.

After some bitter debates at national conference over these two competing strategies, 'black' self-organisation was finally recognised in 1985. However, no sooner had the union declared its support for 'black' self-organisation than the sort of 'white' rank and file opposition the NEC had feared came to fruition. Realising that such 'white' rank and file discontent could threaten their authority and power, the NEC set about taking measures to re-assert control over the black members' groups. Finding that activist opinion was initially split over support for 'black' self-organisation, the NEC used disreputable methods such as mis-representing the black members' groups as being 'separatist' to ensure the defeat of the principle of 'black' self-organisation. By 1990, the black members' groups were integrated into the existing structures of the union and their role re-defined as that of an advisory body responsible for articulating the concerns and opinions of 'black' NALGO workers to the main body of the union.

The evidence discussed in this study regarding 'black' self-organisation also challenges some of the assertions made by Modood (1988; 1992; 1994) regarding the re-configuration of anti-racist politics in the 1980s and 1990s. First, anti-racist action around the identity 'black' and encompassing people of South Asian and Caribbean descent was not replaced by 'ethnic' or 'religious-based' anti-racist action as Modood (1994) claims but continued to exist alongside it. Second, and significantly, this study suggests that racism was more effectively tackled when the strategy of 'black' self-organisation was employed than when it fractured into its constituent 'ethnic' parts (e.g. Hillingdon NALGO) as Modood (1988; 1992; 1994) advocates.

Whilst the pursuit of an anti-racist strategy based on the construction of an imagined 'racial' community was not without its limitations, there is little doubt that during a period which saw organised labour in retreat and the decline of a strong class identity, the establishment of an 'inter-racial' coalition around a 'black' 'racial formation' project ensured that anti-racist action remained on the trade union agenda. This important development alongside the growing prevalence of 'black' workers across a wide range of occupations (Jones 1993; Modood 1997a), the growing participation and representation of 'black' workers in many of the large trade unions (TUC 1991) and the increasing integration of 'black' and 'white' populations in personal and social relationships (see Modood et al 1994), leads one to conclude that the 'fire next time' will constitute a 'multi-racial' revolt with 'black' workers playing a formative role in class-based collective action.

References

- Ackers, P., Smith, C. and Smith, P. 1996. 'Against all odds? British trade unions in the new workplace' in Ackers, P., Smith, C. and Smith, P. (eds.) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*. London: Routledge.
- Alexander, P. 1987. *Racism, Resistance and Revolution*. London: Bookmarks.
- Alexander, P. and Halpern, R. (eds.) 1999. *Racialising Class, Classifying Race: Labour and Difference in Africa, America and Britain*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Aldrich, H. E., Cater, J. C., Jones, T. P. and McEvoy, D. 1981. 'Business development and self-segregation: Asian enterprise in three British cities' in Peach, C., Robinson, V. and Smith, S. (eds.) *Ethnic Segregation in Cities*. London: Croom Helm.
- Allan, G. and Skinner, C. (eds.) 1991. *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*. London: Falmer Press.
- Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anderson, P. 1977. 'The limits and possibilities of trade union action' in Clarke, T. and Clements, T. (eds.) *Trade Unions under Capitalism*. London: Fontana.
- Anthias, F. and Yuval-Davis, N. 1992. *Racialised Boundaries: race, nation, gender, colour and class and anti-racist struggle*. London: Routledge.
- Back, L. 1996. *New Ethnicities and Urban Culture: racisms and multiculturalism in young lives*. London: University College London Press.

- Ball, W. and Solomos, J. 1990. 'Racial Equality and Local Politics' in Ball, W. and Solomos, J. (eds.) *Race and Local Politics*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.
- Bambery, C. 1992. *Killing the Nazi Menace*. London: Socialist Workers Party.
- Banton, M. 1967. *Race Relations*. London: Tavistock.
- Banton, M. 1987. *Racial Theories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Banton, M. 1991. 'The race relations problematic'. *British Journal of Sociology* 42 (1): 115-130.
- Barclays Bank. 1996. *Cultural Change and the Small Firm*. London: Barclays Bank.
- Barker, M. 1981. *The New Racism*. London: Junction Books.
- Beckman, M. 1993. *The 43 Group*. London: Centerprise Publications.
- Beetham, D. 1970. *Transport and Turbans: a comparative study of local politics*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Beishon, S., Virdee, S. and Hagell, A. 1995. *Nursing in a Multi-Ethnic NHS*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Bell, D. 1960. *The End of Ideology*. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.
- Benn, T. 1982. *Parliament, People and Power*. London: Verso.
- Benyon, J. (ed.) 1984. *Scarman and After*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Beynon, H. 1984. *Working for Ford*. London: Penguin.
- Boston, S. 1987. *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Bourke, J. 1994. *Working Class Cultures in Britain: 1890-1960*. London: Routledge.
- Bourne, J. 1980. 'Cheerleaders and Ombudsman: the sociology of race relations in Britain'. *Race and Class* 21 (4): 331-352.

- Braverman, H. 1974. *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Briskin, L. and McDermott, P. (eds.) 1993. *Women Challenging Unions: Feminism, Democracy and Militancy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Brooks, D. 1975. *Race and Labour in London Transport*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, C. 1984. *Black and White Britain: The Third PSI Survey*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Brown, C. and Gay, P. 1985. *Racial Discrimination: 17 years after the Act*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Brown, W. 1973. *Piecework Bargaining*. London: Heinemann.
- Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. 1994. 'Reflections on qualitative data analysis' in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (eds.) *Analysing Qualitative Data*. London: Routledge.
- Buckman, J. 1980. 'Alien working-class response: the Leeds Jewish tailors, 1880-1914' in Lunn, K. (ed.) *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870-1914*. Folkestone: Dawson.
- Burgess, R.G. 1982. 'The role of theory in field research' in Burgess, R. (ed.) *Field Research: a sourcebook and manual*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Burgess, R. G., Pole, C. J., Evans, K. and Priestley, C. 1994. 'Four studies from one or one study from four? Multi-site case study research' in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (eds.) *Analysing Qualitative Data*. London: Routledge
- Buyum, M. 1993. *The Burnsall Strike: Account of a Struggle*. Unpublished M.A

thesis, University of Warwick.

Byrne, D. 1977. 'The 1930 "Arab riot" in South Shields: a race riot that never was', *Race and Class* 18 (3): 261-277.

Cable Street Group. 1995. *The Battle of Cable Street 1936*. London: Cable Street Group.

Callaghan, J. 1995. 'The Communists and the Colonies: anti-imperialism between the wars' in Andrews, G., Fishman, N. and Morgan, K. (eds.) *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party*. London: Pluto Press.

Callinicos, A. 1982. 'The Rank-and-File Movement today'. *International Socialism* 17: 1-38.

Callinicos, A. 1983. *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx*. London: Bookmarks.

Callinicos, A. 1993. *Race and Class*. London: Bookmarks.

Campaign Against Racism and Fascism. 1997. 'Ford's: Inter-union dispute or race dispute?', *Campaign Against Racism and Fascism* 37: 15.

Carmichael, S. and Hamilton, C.V. 1968. *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America*. Boston: Cape.

Carter, B. 1979. 'Class, Militancy and Union Character'. *Sociological Review* 27(2): 297-316.

Carter, B. 1995. 'Marxist Class Analysis and the Labour Process'. *Capital and Class* 55: 33-72.

Carter, B, Joshi, S. and Harris, C. 1987. 'The 1951-55 Conservative Government and the racialisation of black immigration'. *Policy Papers in Ethnic Relations*

- No.11. Coventry: CRER, University of Warwick.
- Castells, M. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Castles, S. and Kosack, G. 1985. *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. 1982. *The Empire Strikes Back*. London: Hutchinson.
- Clark, J. and Causer, G. 1991. 'Introduction: Research Strategies and Decisions' in Allan, G. and Skinner, C. (eds.) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*. London: Falmer Press.
- Clarke, T. and Clements, T. (eds.) 1977. *Trade Unions under Capitalism*. London: Fontana.
- Clegg, H. 1979. *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cliff, T. and Gluckstein, D. 1988. *The Labour Party - a Marxist History*. London: Bookmarks.
- Cohen, P. 1988. 'The Perversions of Inheritance: studies in the making of multi-racist Britain' in Cohen, P. and Bains, H. S. (eds.) *Multi-racist Britain*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Cole, M. 1997. 'Race and racism' in Payne, M. (ed.) *The Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Colling, T. and Ferner, A. 1995. 'Privatization and Marketization' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Commission for Racial Equality. 1984. *Race Relations Code of Practice for the*

- Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity in Employment.* London: Commission for Racial Equality.
- Communist Party. no date. *Racism Action Guide: How to combat it.* London: CP National Race Relations Committee.
- Communist Party. 1975. *The Fight against Racism in Britain.* London: CP Education Department.
- Community Consultants and CAG Consultants. 1994. *Leicester Asian Business Survey Report.* Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Cox, O. C. 1970. *Caste, Class and Race.* New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Crompton, R. 1993. *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates.* Cambridge: Polity.
- Crompton, R. and Jones, G. 1984. *White-Collar Proletariat: Deskilling and Gender in the Clerical Labour Process.* Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Crompton, R. and Jones, G. 1988. 'Researching white collar organisations: why sociologists should not stop doing case studies' in Bryman, A. (ed.) *Doing Research in Organisations.* London: Routledge.
- Crouch, C. 1977. *Class Conflict and the Industrial Relations Crisis.* London: Heinemann.
- Crouch, C. 1982. *Trade Unions: The Logic of Collective Action.* London: Fontana.
- Cunnison, S. and Stageman, J. 1993. *Feminizing the Unions.* Aldershot: Avebury.
- Curran, J. and Blackburn, R. A. 1991. 'Introduction' in Curran, J. and Blackburn, R.A. (eds.) *Paths of Enterprise.* London: Routledge.
- Dahrendorf, R. 1959. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society.* London:

Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Daniel, W. W. 1968. *Racial Discrimination in England*. London: Penguin Books.

Darlington, R. 1994. *The Dynamics of Workplace Unionism*. London: Mansell.

Davis, F. J. 1991. *Who is Black? One Nation's Definition*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

De Ste. Croix. G. E. M. 1981. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*. London: Duckworth.

Dickens, L. and Hall, M. 1995. 'The State: Labour Law and Industrial Relations' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Doeringer, P. and Piore, M. 1971. *Internal Labour Markets and Manpower Analysis*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Heath.

Draper, H. 1978. *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution: The Politics of Social Classes*. Volume 2. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Dresser, M. 1986. *Black and White on the Buses: the 1963 Colour Bar Dispute in Bristol*. Bristol: Bristol Broadsides.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1969. *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*. Cleveland: World Publishing.

Duffield, M. 1988. *Black Radicalism and the Politics of De-Industrialisation: The Hidden History of Indian Foundry Workers*. Aldershot: Avebury.

Eastern Eye. 1999. *Britain's Richest Asian 200*. London: Eastern Eye.

Edwards, P. 1995. 'The Employment Relationship' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Ekblom, P. and Simon, F. 1988. *Crime and Racial Harassment in Asian-run Small Shops*. Paper 15. London: Home Office Prevention Unit.
- Eldridge, J., Cressey, P. and MacInnes, J. 1991. *Industrial Sociology and Economic Crisis*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Engels, F. 1987. *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*. London: Penguin Books.
- Esmail, A. and Everington, S. 1993. 'Racial discrimination against doctors from ethnic minorities'. *British Medical Journal* 306: 691-692.
- Fairbrother, P. 1984. *All Those in Favour: The Politics of Union Democracy*. London: Pluto Press.
- Fairbrother, P. 1989. 'State workers: class position and collective action' in Duncan, G. (ed.) *Democracy and the Capitalist State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fairbrother, P. and Waddington, J. 1990. 'The Politics of Trade Unionism: Evidence, Policy and Theory'. *Capital and Class* 41: 15-56.
- Fishman, N. 1995. 'No Home but the Trade Union Movement: Communist Activists and "Reformist" Leaders: 1925-1956' in Andrews, G., Fishman, N. and Morgan, K. (eds.) *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party*. London: Pluto Press.
- Foot, P. 1965. 'The Strike at Courtaulds, Preston: 24 May to 12 June 1965'. *IRR Newsletter Supplement*.
- Foot, P. no date. *Workers Against Racism*. London: International Socialists.
- Fosh, P. and Heery, E. (eds.) 1990. *Trade Unions and Their Members: Studies in*

- Union Democracy and Organisation*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Fryer, P. 1984. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*. London: Pluto Press.
- Fryer, R. H. 1989. 'Public service trade unionism in the twentieth century' in Mailly, R., Dimmock, S. J. and Sethi, A. S. (eds.) *Industrial Relations in the Public Services*. London: Routledge.
- Gabriel, J. 1994. *Racism, Culture, Markets*. London: Routledge.
- Gilroy, P. 1980. 'Managing the "Underclass": a further note on the sociology of race relations in Britain'. *Race and Class* 22 (1): 47-62.
- Gilroy, P. 1981/2. 'You can't fool the youths...race and class formation in the 1980s'. *Race and Class* 23 (2/3): 207-222.
- Gilroy, P. 1982. 'Steppin out of Babylon: Race, Class and Autonomy' in CCCS *The Empire Strikes Back*. London: Hutchinson.
- Gilroy, P. 1987. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. London: Hutchinson.
- Gilroy, P. 1990a. 'One nation under a groove: the cultural politics of "race" and racism in Britain' in Goldberg, D. T. (ed.) *Anatomy of Racism*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Gilroy, P. 1990b. 'The end of anti-racism'. *New Community* 17 (1): 71-83.
- Gilroy, P. 1993. *Small Acts*. London: Serpents Tail.
- Gordon, P. and Reilly, D. 1986. 'Guestworkers of the sea: racism in British shipping'. *Race and Class* 28 (2): 73-82.
- Gorz, A. 1982. *Farewell to the Working Class*. London: Pluto Press.
- Gramsci, A. 1994. *Pre-Prison Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Greater London Council Anti-Racist Trade Union Group. 1984. *Racism Within Trade Unions*. London: Greater London Council.
- Green, J. 1990. 'Some findings on Britain's black working class: 1900-1914'. *Immigrants and Minorities* 19 (2): 168-177.
- Grint, K. 1991. *The Sociology of Work*. London: Polity Press.
- Gubbay, J. 1997. 'A Marxist Critique of Weberian Class Analysis'. *Sociology* 31(1): 73-89.
- Hakim, C. 1987. *Research Design: Strategies and Choices in the Design of Social Research*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Hall, S. 1983. 'The great moving right show' in Hall, S. and Jacques, M. (eds.) *The Politics of Thatcherism*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Harman, C. 1988. *The Fire Last time: 1968 and after*. London: Bookmarks.
- Heath, A. and Ridge, J. 1983. 'Social Mobility of Ethnic Minorities'. *Journal of Biosocial Science Supplement* 8: 169-184.
- Heery, E. and Kelly, J. 1988. 'Do Female Representatives Make A Difference? Women Full Time Officials and Trade Union Work'. *Work, Employment and Society* 2 (4): 487-505.
- Hinton, J. and Hyman, R. 1975. *Trade Unions and Revolution: The Industrial Politics of the Early British Communist Party*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. 1990. *Industry and Empire*. London: Penguin Books.
- Holmes, C. 1988. *John Bull's Island*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Home Office. 1977. *A Guide to the Race Relations Act 1976*. London: Home Office.
- Honigmann, J. J. 1982. 'Sampling in Ethnographic Fieldwork' in Burgess, R. G.

- (ed.) *Field Research: a sourcebook and field manual*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Howe, D. 1978. 'Enter Mrs. Thatcher: A Race Today Statement For Our Time'.
Race Today 10 (3): 57-62.
- Husbands, C. 1983. *Racial Exclusionism and the City*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Hyman, R. 1972. *Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hyman, R. and Price, R. 1983. *The New Working Class?* Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Iganski, P. and Payne, G. 1996. 'Declining Racial Disadvantage in the British Labour Market'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19 (1): 113-133.
- International Socialists. 1974. *The Black Worker In Britain*. London: International Socialists.
- Jenkins, R. 1986. *Racism and Recruitment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenkins, R. and Solomos, J. (eds.) 1987. *Racism and Equal Opportunity in the 1980s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, T. 1993. *Britain's Ethnic Minorities*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Josephides, S. 1990. 'Principles, strategies and anti-racist campaigns: the case of the Indian Worker's Association' in Goulbourne, H. (ed.) *Black Politics in Britain*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Joshi, S. and Carter, B. 1984. 'The role of Labour in the creation of a racist Britain'.
Race and Class 25 (3): 53-71.
- Kelly, J. 1988. *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*. London: Verso.
- Kelly, J. 1996. 'Union militancy and social partnership' in Ackers, P., Smith, C. and

- Smith, P. (eds.) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*. London: Routledge.
- Kessler, S. and Bayliss, F. 1995. *Contemporary British Industrial Relations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Kirk, N. 1985. *The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian England*. London: Croom Helm.
- Labour Research Department. 1990. 'Race equality and collective bargaining'. *Bargaining Report*. 101: 5-11.
- Labour Research Department. 1993. *Black Workers and Trade Unions*. London: Labour Research Department.
- Lawrence, E. 1982. 'In the abundance of water the fool is thirsty: sociology and black "pathology"' in CCCS *The Empire Strikes Back*. London: Hutchinson.
- Lawrence, E. 1994. *Gender and Trade Unions*. London: Taylor Francis.
- Lee, G. 1984. *Trade Unionism and Race*. Birmingham: University of Aston Management Centre.
- Lee, G. 1987. 'Black members and their unions' in Lee, G. and Loveridge, R. (eds.) *The Manufacture of Disadvantage*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Lenin, V. I. 1976. *What Is To Be Done?* Peking: Foreign Language Press.
- Lockwood, D. 1989. *The Blackcoated Worker*. Second Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lunn, K. 1985. 'Race Relations or Industrial Relations?: Race and Labour in Britain, 1880-1950'. *Immigrants and Minorities* 4 (2): 1-29.
- Luxemburg, R. 1994. *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Lyddon, D. 1984. 'Demythologising the downturn'. *International Socialism* 25: 91-

- Mac an Ghaill, M. 1988. *Young, Gifted and Black: Student-Teacher Relations in the Schooling of Black Youth*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- McCarthy, W. E. J. (ed.) 1985. *Trade Unions*. London: Penguin Books.
- McCrudden, C., Smith, D. J. and Brown, C. 1991. *Racial Justice at Work*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- McDermott, M. 1979. *Irish Catholics and the British Labour Movement: a study with particular reference to London, 1918-1970*. Unpublished M.A thesis, University of Kent.
- McEvoy, D., Jones, T. P., Cater, J. and Aldrich, H. 1982. *Asian immigrant businesses in British cities*. Paper presented to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Annual meeting, September.
- McIlroy, J. 1995. *Trade Unions in Britain Today*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- McIlroy, J. and Ball, J. 1982. 'Racism at Work: The role of trade union education'. *Contemporary Affairs Briefing* 2 (4): 1-14.
- Maksymiv, W., Eaton, J. and Gill, C. 1990. *The British Trade Union Directory*. Longman: Harlow.
- Malcolm X. 1970. *By Any Means Necessary*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Malcolm X. 1994. *The Last Speeches*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Mann, M. 1973. *Consciousness and Action Among the Western Working Class*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Marsh, D. 1992. *The New Politics of British Trade Unionism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan

- Press.
- Marshall, G., Rose, D., Newby, H. and Vogler, C. 1988. *Social Class in Modern Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Marshall, T. H. 1950. *Citizenship and Social Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, R. 1980. *TUC - The Growth of a Pressure Group: 1868-1976*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. 1977. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press.
- Mason, D. 1994. 'Employment and the labour market'. *New Community* 20 (2): 301-308.
- Mayet, G. 1986. *Race and Trade Unions*. Unpublished document.
- Melucci, A. 1980. 'The new social movements: a theoretical approach'. *Social Science Information* 19(2): 199-226.
- Messina, A. M. 1989. *Race and Party Competition in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Metcalf, H., Modood, T. and Virdee, S. 1996. *Asian Self-Employment in England: the interaction of culture and economics*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Miles, R. 1982. *Racism and Migrant Labour*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Miles, R. 1984. 'Marxism versus the Sociology of "Race Relations"'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7 (2): 217-237.
- Miles, R. 1987a. 'Recent Marxist theories of nationalism and the issue of racism'. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (1): 24-43.

- Miles, R. 1987b. 'Class relations and racism in Britain in the 1980s'. *Revue Europeene des Migrations Internationales* 3(1/2): 223-228.
- Miles, R. 1988. 'Trade Unions and Racism' in Cashmore, E. E. *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, R. 1989. *Racism*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, R. 1993. *Racism After 'Race Relations'*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, R. 1994. 'A rise of Racism in Contemporary Europe?: Some sceptical reflections on its nature and extent'. *New Community* 20 (4): 547-562.
- Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. 1977a. 'Class, race, ethnicity and political action'. *Political Studies* 25 (4): 491-507.
- Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. 1977b. *The TUC, Black Workers and New Commonwealth Immigration, 1954-1973*. Working Paper No.6. Birmingham: University of Aston.
- Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. 1978. 'The TUC and black workers, 1974-1976'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 16 (2): 195-207.
- Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. (eds.) 1979. *Racism and Political Action in Britain*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. 1984. *White Man's Country: Racism and British Politics*. London: Pluto Press.
- Miliband, R. 1987. *Parliamentary Socialism*. London: Merlin Press.
- Miliband, R. 1991. *Divided Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, C. 1996. *Public Sector Trade Unionism and Radical Politics*. Aldershot:

Dartmouth Publishing Company.

Mitchell, J. C. 1983. 'Case and situation analysis'. *Sociological Review* 31: 187-211.

Modood, T. 1988. '"Black", racial equality and Asian identity'. *New Community* 14(3): 397-404.

Modood, T. 1992. *Not Easy Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship*. London: Runnymede Trust and Trentham Books.

Modood, T. 1994. 'Political blackness and British Asians'. *Sociology* 28 (4): 859-876.

Modood, T. 1996. 'The Changing Context of "Race" in Britain'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 30(1): 3-13.

Modood, T. 1997a. 'Employment' in Modood, T., Berthoud, R., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S. and Beishon, S. *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

Modood, T. 1997b. '"Difference", Cultural Racism and Anti-Racism' in Werbner, P. and Modood, T. (eds.) *Debating Cultural Hybridity*. London: Zed Books.

Modood, T., Beishon, S. and Virdee, S. 1994. *Changing Ethnic Identities*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

Modood, T., Berthoud, R., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S. and Beishon, S. 1997. *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

Moore, R. 1975. *Racism and Black Resistance in Britain*. London: Pluto Press.

Moran, M. 1980. *The Politics of Industrial Relations*. London: Macmillan Press.

Morton, A. L. 1994. *A People's History of England*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Newham Monitoring Project. 1991. *Newham: the forging of a black community*. London: Newham Monitoring Project/Campaign Against Racism and Fascism.

- Nicholson, B. 1974. *Racialism, Fascism and the Trade Unions*. London: TGWU Region No.1.
- Nolan, P. and Walsh, J. 1995. 'The Structure of the Economy and Labour Market' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Noon, M. 1993. 'Racial discrimination in speculative applications: evidence from the UK's top one hundred firms'. *Human Resource Management Journal* 3 (4): 35-47.
- Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). 1994. *Key statistics for local authorities: 1991 census*. London: HMSO.
- O'Higgins, R. 1961. 'The Irish influence in the Chartist movement'. *Past and Present* 20: 83-96.
- Omi, M. and Winant, H. 1986. *Racial Formation in the United States*. London: Routledge.
- Ouseley, H. 1990. 'Resisting Institutional Change' in Ball, W. and Solomos, J. (eds.) *Race and Local Politics*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Owen, D. 1992. *Ethnic Minorities in Great Britain: Settlement Patterns. 1991 Census Statistical Paper No. 1*. Coventry: CRER, University of Warwick.
- Owen, D. and Green, A. 1992. 'Labour market experience and change among ethnic groups in Great Britain'. *New Community* 19 (1): 7-29.
- Palmer, G. 1983. *British Industrial Relations*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Panayi, P. 1994. *Immigration, Ethnicity and Racism in Britain: 1815-1945*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Parkin, F. 1982. *Max Weber*. London: Routledge.
- Parmar, P. 1990. 'Black Feminism: the Politics of Articulation' in Rutherford, J. (ed.) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Pelling, H. 1987. *A History of British Trade Unionism*. London: Penguin.
- Perlo, V. 1975. *Economics of Racism USA - Roots of Black Inequality*. New York: International Publishers.
- Phizacklea, A. 1984. 'A sociology of migration or "Race Relations"? A view from Britain'. *Current Sociology* 32 (3): 199-218.
- Phizacklea, A. and Miles, R. 1978. 'The Strike at Grunwick'. *New Community* 6 (3): 268-278.
- Phizacklea, A. and Miles, R. 1979. 'Working-class racist beliefs in the inner-city' in Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. (eds.) *Racism and Political Action in Britain*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Phizacklea, A. and Miles, R. 1980. *Labour and Racism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Phizacklea, A. and Miles, R. 1987. 'The British Trade Union Movement and Racism' in Lee, G. and Loveridge, R. (eds.), *The Manufacture of Disadvantage*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Piratin, P. 1978. *Our Flag Stays Red*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Poulantzas, N. 1973. *Political Power and Social Classes*. London: New Left Books.
- Poulantzas, N. 1978. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. London. New Left Books.
- Race Today Collective. 1983. *The Struggle of Asian Workers in Britain*. London:

Race Today Publications.

- Raison, T. 1984. 'The view from the government' in Benyon, J. (ed.) *Scarman and After*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Ram, M. 1992. 'Coping with Racism: Asian Employers in the Inner-city'. *Work, Employment and Society* 6 (4): 601-618.
- Ramdin, R. 1987. *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain*. London: Gower Publishing Company.
- Reich, M. 1971. 'The economics of racism' in Gordon, D. M. (ed.) *Problems in Political Economy*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Heath.
- Rex, J. 1970. *Race Relations and Sociological Theory*. London: Weidenfeld Nicolson.
- Rex, J. 1973. *Race, Colonialism and the City*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rex, J. 1979. 'Black Militancy and Class Conflict' in Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. (eds.) *Racism and Political Action in Britain*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rex, J. 1980. 'Immigrants and British labour: the sociological context' in Lunn, K. (ed.) *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870-1914*. Folkestone: Dawson.
- Rex, J. 1986a. *Race and Ethnicity*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Rex, J. 1986b. 'The Role of Class Analysis in the Study of Race Relations - A Weberian Perspective' in Rex, J. and Mason, D. (eds.) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rex, J. 1991. *Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Mobilisation in Britain. Monograph in Ethnic Relations, No. 5*. Coventry: CRER, University of Warwick.

- Rex, J. and Moore, R. 1967. *Race, Community and Conflict*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Rex, J. and Tomlinson, S. 1979. *Colonial Immigrants in a British City*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Ritchie, J. and Spencer, L. 1994. 'Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research' in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (eds.) *Analysing Qualitative Data*. London: Routledge.
- Robinson, C. 1983. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. London: Zed Books.
- Roediger, D. 1994. *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*. London: Verso.
- Rogaly, J. 1977. *Grunwick*. London: Penguin.
- Rose, H. 1991. 'Case Studies' in Allan, G. and Skinner, C. (eds.) *Handbook for Research Students in the Social Sciences*. London: Falmer Press.
- Rosen, M. and Widgery, D. (eds.) 1994. *The Chatto Book of Dissent*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Rosenberg, C. 1987. *Britain on the Brink of Revolution*. London: Bookmarks.
- Saville, J. 1987. *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sayyid, B.S. 1997. *A Fundamental Fear*. London: Zed Books.
- Scarman, Lord. 1981. *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Inquiry by the Rt Hon. The Lord Scarman OBE*. London: HMSO.
- Sheldrake, J. 1991. *Industrial Relations and Politics in Britain: 1880-1989*. London: Pinter Publishers

- Shukra, K. 1996. 'A Scramble for the British Pie'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 30 (1): 28-35.
- Silverman, D. 1993. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sivanandan, A. 1976. 'Race, class and the state: the black experience in Britain'. *Race and Class* 17 (4): 347-368.
- Sivanandan, A. 1977. 'The liberation of the black intellectual'. *Race and Class* 18 (4): 329-344.
- Sivanandan, A. 1982. *A Different Hunger*. London: Pluto Press.
- Sivanandan, A. 1990. *Communities of Resistance*. London: Verso.
- Small, S. 1994. *Racialised Barriers: The Black Experience in the United States and England in the 1980s*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, D. J. 1977. *Racial Disadvantage in Britain*. London: Penguin.
- Solomos, J. 1988. *Black Youth, Racism and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Solomos, J. 1993. *Race and Racism in Britain*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Solomos, J. and Back, L. 1995. *Race, Politics and Social Change*. London: Routledge.
- Solomos, J. and Back, L. 1996. *Racism and Society*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Solomos, J. and Ball, W. 1990. 'New Initiatives and the Possibilities of Reform' in Ball, W. and Solomos, J. (eds.) *Race and Local Politics*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.
- Southall Monitoring Group. 1981. *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community*.

- London: Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights.
- Srebnik, H. 1989. 'The British Communist Party's National Jewish Committee and the fight against anti-Semitism during the Second World War'. *Immigrants and Minorities* 8 (1 and 2): 82-97.
- Stake, R. E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Stephens, L. 1956. *Employment of Coloured Workers in the Birmingham Area*. London: Institute of Personnel Management.
- Symanski, A. 1976. 'Racial discrimination and white gain'. *American Sociological Review* 41 (3): 403-414.
- Taylor, R. 1994. *The Future of the Trade Unions*. London: Andre Deutsch.
- Taylor, S. 1984. 'The Scarman Report and explanations of riots' in Benyon, J. (ed.) *Scarman and After*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Terry, M. 1995. 'Trade unions: shop stewards and the workplace' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Thompson, E. P. 1991. *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Penguin.
- Touraine, A. 1977. *The Self-Production of Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trade Union Congress. 1988. *Meeting the Challenge: First Report of the Special Review Body*. London: Trade Union Congress.
- Trade Union Congress. 1991. *Involvement of Black Workers in Trade Unions*. London: Trade Union Congress.
- Tremblay, M. A. 1982. 'The Key Informant Technique: A Non-Ethnographic Application' in Burgess, R. G. (ed.) *Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field*

- Manual*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Verberckmoes, J. 1996. 'The United Kingdom: Between Policy and Party' in Pasture, P., Verberckmoes, J. and De Witte, H. (eds.) *The Lost Perspective? Trade Unions Between Ideology and Social Action in the New Europe*. Volume 1. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Virdee, S. 1992. *Part of the Union? Trade Union Participation by Ethnic Minority Workers*. London: Commission for Racial Equality.
- Virdee, S. 1995. *Racial Violence and Harassment*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Virdee, S. 1997. 'Racial Harassment' in Modood, T., Berthoud, R., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S. and Beishon, S. *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- Virdee, S. 1999. 'England: Racism, Anti-Racism and the Changing Position of Racialised Social Groups in Economic Relations' in Dale, G. and Cole, M. (eds.) *Migrant Labour in the European Union: Marxist and Neo-Marxist Analyses*. Oxford: Berg.
- Virdee, S. and Grint, K. 1994. 'Black Self-Organisation in Trade Unions'. *Sociological Review* 42 (2): 202-226.
- Waddington, J. and Whitson, C. 1995. 'Trade Unions: Growth, Structure and Policy' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Watson, D. 1996. 'Black workers in London in the 1940s'. *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 1 (1): 149-158.
- Webb, S. and Webb, B. 1919. *The History of Trade Unionism, 1666-1920*. London:

Webb and Webb.

Whyte, W. F. 1982. 'Interviewing in Field Research' in Burgess, R. G. (ed.) *Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field Manual*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Widgery, D. 1986. *Beating Time*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Williams, B. 1980. 'The beginnings of Jewish trade unionism in Manchester, 1889-1891' in Lunn, K. (ed.) *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870-1914*. Folkestone: Dawson.

Winchester, D. and Bach, S. 1995. 'The State: The Public Sector' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Witte, R. 1996. *Racist Violence and the State*. London: Longman.

Wood, E. M. 1986. *The Retreat From Class*. London: Verso.

Wrench, J. 1987. 'Unequal Comrades: Trade Unions, Equal Opportunity and Racism' in Jenkins, R. and Solomos, J. (eds.) *Racism and Equal Opportunity Policies in the 1980s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wrench, J. and Virdee, S. 1996. 'Organising the Unorganised: "Race", Poor Work and Trade Unions' in Ackers, P., Smith, C. and Smith, P. (eds.) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*. London: Routledge.

Wright, P. 1968. *The Coloured Worker in British Industry*. London: Oxford University Press.

Young, K. and Connolly, N. 1981. *Policy and Practice in the Multi-Racial City*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

Zweig, F. 1961. *The Worker in an Affluent Society*. London: Heinemann.

Periodicals

Black Action. 1989a. *Issue 2*. London: NALGO Black Action.

Black Action. 1989b. *Annual Conference Pack 1989*. London: NALGO Black Action.
p.14.

Bradford Black October 1977

Camden Black Workers Group. no date a. *Camden Black Workers Group: 1982-1986*.
London: Camden Black Workers Group.

Camden Black Workers Group. no date b. *Constitution*. London: Camden Black
Workers Group.

Camden Black Workers Group. 1984. 'Lucille Guichard - 15 years', *Black Eye*. May,
pp.5-6.

Camden Journal. 1984. 23rd February, pp.1.

Coutts, J. 1987. *Hillingdon Ethnic Group*. Circular sent to all members of Hillingdon
NALGO Branch, 26th March.

CPSA. 1980. *National Annual Report 1979*. London: CPSA.

CPSA. 1981. *National Annual Report 1980*. London: CPSA.

Daly, J. 1988. *Positive Action in NALGO: A Way Forward*. Circular sent to
Secretaries of District Councils, Branches and Sectional and Professional
Societies, 21st October.

Daly, J. 1989. *Positive Action in NALGO: The Organisation of Black Members*.
Circular sent to Secretaries of District Councils, Branches and Sectional and
Professional Societies, 18th October.

Ealing Black NALGO. 1987a. *Constitution*. London: Ealing Black NALGO.

Ealing Black NALGO. 1987b. *Inaugural Conference*. London: Ealing Black NALGO.

First Official National Black Members Conference. 1986. *Transcript of proceedings*.
Leeds, May 31st.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. no date. *Rules and Regulations*. London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1987a. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. June, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1987b. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. July, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1987c. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. August, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1987d. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. September, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1987e. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. October, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1987f. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. November, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1987g. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. December, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1988a. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. January, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1988b. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. February, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.

- Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1988c. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. March, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.
- Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1988d. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. April, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.
- Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1988e. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. May, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.
- Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1988f. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. July, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.
- Hillingdon Ethnic Group. 1988g. *Minutes of Hillingdon Ethnic Group Meeting*. November, London: Hillingdon Ethnic Group.
- Kerry, D. A. 1987. *Separate Groups - one union or several?* Circular sent to all members of Hillingdon NALGO Branch, 31st March.
- Labour Research Department. 1983. 'Race at work', *Labour Research*. July, pp.182-183.
- Lalkar. 1997. 'Hillingdon Hospital Strike', *Lalkar* July/August, p.14.
- Lambeth NALGO. 1981. *Race and Racism*. London: Lambeth NALGO.
- London Borough of Camden. 1996. *Compendium of Employee Planning*. Issues 1a and 2. London: London Borough of Camden.
- London Borough of Ealing. 1990. *Monitoring Our Equal Opportunities Policy: Some Questions and Answers*. London: London Borough of Ealing.
- London Borough of Hillingdon. 1998. *Equal Opportunities Employment Programme*. London: London Borough of Hillingdon.
- Metropolitan District Council and Tower Hamlets Branch of NALGO. 1984. *Motion*

on Self-Organisation. London: Metropolitan District Council and Tower Hamlets Branch of NALGO.

NALGO. 1975. *NALGO Annual Report 1974*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1977. *NALGO Annual Report 1976*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1979. *NALGO Annual Report 1978*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1981. *NALGO Annual Report 1980*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1982. *NALGO Annual Report 1981*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1983. *NALGO Annual Report 1982*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1984a. *NALGO Annual Report 1983*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1984b. *Race Equality*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1986. *NALGO Annual Report 1985*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1987a. *NALGO Annual Report 1986*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1987b. *Branch Membership and Branch Secretaries List*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1988. *NALGO Annual Report 1987*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1989. *NALGO Annual Report 1988*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1990. *NALGO Annual Report 1989*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1991. *NALGO Annual Report 1990*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1992. *NALGO Annual Report 1991*. London: NALGO.

NALGO. 1993. *NALGO Annual Report 1992*. London: NALGO.

National Black Members Co-ordinating Committee. no date. *None So Fit as to Break Their Chains as Those That Bear Them*. London: NBMCC.

National Executive Council NALGO. 1988. *The National Executive Council's Report on Positive Action*. London: NALGO.

Pinder, B. 1961. 'Trade Unions and Coloured Workers'. *Marxism Today*. September, pp.282-286.

Positive Action Working Party. 1987. *Positive Action in NALGO*. London: NALGO.

Race Today May 1969

Runnymede Bulletin December/ January 1996, pp.12.

SCPS. 1983. *SCPS Annual Report 1982*. London: SCPS.

SCPS. 1984. *SCPS Annual Report 1983*. London: SCPS.

Socialist Review April 1998, pp.31

The Black Liberator January 1975-August 1976.

Newspapers

Public Service July/August 1976, pp.6

Public Service July/August 1978, pp.9

Public Service November 1982, pp.16

Public Service Mid-March 1983, pp.13

Public Service July/August 1983, pp.5

Public Service May 1986, pp.9

Public Service June 1986, pp.6

Public Service July 1987, pp.8

Public Service July 1988, pp.3

Public Service November 1988, pp.2

Public Service July 1989, pp.5

Public Service July 1990, pp.6

APPENDIX

Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

(for use with branch officials and lay representatives)

1. Basic information

- Age, gender, ethnicity
- Job title, length of service
- Position/s held within the union and for how long

2. What is the relationship between ‘black’ and ‘white’ workers at work?

Probe:

- Relations in the present
- Relations over the past five years
- Examples of problems/ difficulties
- Examples of co-operation

3. What measures has the branch taken to tackle racism at work/ in the union itself?

Probe:

- Negotiating equality agreements with employers; content
- Self-organised structures within the union; why and who set them up;
opposition to structures
- Union policies and statements
- Educational and training measures to combat racism

- Reserved seats for ‘blacks’ on branch committees
- Campaigns against racism inside/ outside of the workplace
- If little or no measures taken, why not?
- Explore influence of national policy on branch activities

4. How effective do you think these measures have been in combating racism at work/ in the union?

Probe:

- Changes in ‘black’ employment in non-manual jobs
- Levels of ‘black’ participation and representation in union
- Problems with measures

5. In what ways could racism be more effectively tackled?

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR HELP